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THE PRICE OF MONEY

A Play in Four Acts


Requiescat in pace.
Vespasian

BY
ALFRED SUTRO

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NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
26 WEST 22D STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND, LONDON.



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TO MY FRIEND

Israel Zangwill.

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The following is a copy of the original Bill

THE IMPERIAL THEATRE

Lessee and Manager: Mr. LEWIS WALLER

On Saturday, 14th October, 1905, and every evening at 8:30.

An Original Play in Four Acts, by

ALFRED SUTRO

ENTITLED

THE PRICE OF MONEY

"Different men love differently, and different things"

JOSEPH TREMBLETT.....	Mr. Lewis Waller.
WILLIAM TREMBLETT.....	Mr. Norman McKinnel.
LORD CARDEW.....	Mr. Frank Mills.
JOHN COLLIS.....	Mr. Arthur Lewis.
HARRIS.....	Mr. Patrick Digan.
MORGAN.....	Mr. S. B. Brereton.
PORTER.....	Mr. C. McGuinness.
MARTHA TREMBLETT.....	Miss Edyth Olive
MAY.....	Miss Eve Titheradge.
HON. SUSAN LESSON.....	Miss Henrietta Watson.
MRS. MORPHITT.....	Miss Helen Ferrers.
MRS. BARTER.....	Miss Gwendolen Floyd
MRS. BONHAM.....	Miss Helen Leyton.
LILIAN TREMBLETT.....	Miss Evelyn Millard.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

- ACT I. Study in Joseph Tremblett's House, Camden Town.
- ACT II. Drawing Room in William Tremblett's House in Sussex Gardens.
- ACT III. Studio at Miss Lesson's.
- ACT IV. Same as Act I.

THE PRICE OF MONEY.

PROPERTY PLOT.

ACT I. (JOE'S STUDY.)

Faded red ground Turkey carpet-square. Faded, brown ground carpet hearth rug, before fire. Office table, set 3 feet out of centre, over to L, leather top, with two drawers at back, on it, twelve manuscripts of books, etc., some unbound, but the leaves fastened together with brass paper-fasteners, others bound in rough brown paper covers, some magazines, pad of telegram forms, "tear off" note block—blotting pad, glass inkstand, pens and pencil, match stand, with wooden matches (heads down), small photograph frame, to stand (with photograph of aged man therein) and fold-over wallet with strap, in right hand drawer of table. Wastepaper basket, top R. corner of table. Low backed, oak library chair, V-shaped projecting seat, with cushion, above table. Walnut or oak chairs, medium height, stuffed backs and seats, covered in dark green leather, thus: One L. of table, one R. of table, one down L., one up L. C. at back, one down R. before bureau. Down R., bureau with writing-desk flap and glazed door bookcase over, the bookcase filled with books. On writing flap:—blotting pad, inkstand, pens, three small account books, bills and various papers. Windsor high-back arm-chair with cushion in cover. Copper scuttle with coals and scoop. On mantel-shelf:—small Chippendale clock, four dark green vases, green ware tobacco jar and cover, two pipe racks, several pipes, two match stands, with wooden matches therein (heads down), two ash-trays, two pipe cases (open) and small statuette. Fire of gas through asbestos lumps (note scenery well protected, sheet iron or asbestos covered). Inner guard before fire. Fender, fire-irons on stands at end of fender. Lounge chair (no arms), covered in dark leather, worn and faded. Oak side table with several books thereon. Small oak table on which is old typewriter and newspaper. Cover off type-writer. Small stool. Small settee or window seat. Oak bookcase, no doors, filled with books, on the top are other books and vase containing fern in pot. Cupboard, with closed doors,

with knobs and keyhole, on the top is brass reading lamp with shade and several books. On window ledge are two geraniums, (in flower) and three ferns. Window draped with chintz curtains and inner curtains of white muslin. On walls are pictures in black frames.

LIMES PLOT.

ACT I. (JOE'S STUDY.)

Right Perch.	1	medium amber, flood (no lens).
Left Perch.	1	“ “ “ “
Right Stage.	1	open, three quarter box, white clear on back cloth.
Left Stage.	1	“ “
Right Stage.	1	deep flame colour, open lens, through fire.

ACT II. (WILLIE'S DRAWING-ROOM.)

Light green Ambusson carpet square. White skin rugs inside lower doors, L. and R. Mounted Tiger skin before fire. Pale green ground, carpet rug, outside doors at back. Gilt furniture suite, covered in light silk tapestry, thus:—Low backed and armed couch L. C., two arm-chairs, one C. one R., below doors, one L. of tea table, one above tea table and one R. above doors, small square occasional table C., half between couch and arm-chair. Gilt shaped tea table up R. C., on it:—inlaid (or silver plated) tea tray with 4 small cups and saucers, silver plated teapot, sugar bowl (with tongs) and cream jug, and plate with sandwiches or cut bread and butter. Shaped mantelpiece on which are French clock, two small vases, and two ware vases containing tall bunches of large yellow Japanese chrysanthemums. Log fire, alight. White hearth, white curb fender. Dulled brass log box containing logs. Tall palm in brass vase. Gilt console table with marble top on which is group of ferns in jardinière. Large shaped oblong table with ormolu mount, on it—tall palm in brass vase. Two, three-branch silver-plated Sheffield candelabra, with candles and yellow shades. Bronze statuette and several well-bound books. Tall palm in corner up L. in brass vase. Small gilt occasional table in window recess, on it, a flowering heatherplant in brass vase. Inlaid writing-table with range of drawers under lower end, on it:—blotting book, stationary case, with note-paper and envelopes, brass inkstand, with two ink-bottles, quill pens and glass bowl containing huge bunch of violets. Light gilt chair. Window draped with long curtain and valance in light old gold, brocaded satin or sateen. On wall are four ormolu mounted candle

brackets with candles and yellow shades, thus:—two light ones, R. and L. above doors and two light ones in centres of back flats. In corridor, outside centre doors, oak hall table on which is brass bowl, two oak hall chairs covered in leather.

LIMES PLOT.

ACT II. (WILLIE'S DRAWING-ROOM.)

Perches as Act I.

Fire perches as Act I.

ACT III. (MISS LESSON'S STUDIO.)

Dark parquet stage cloth down all over stage. Square oak table L. C., green baize top, on it:—Two bottled ink-stand with ink, quill pens. Strike-down gong bell, blotting pad, loose blotting sheet, and sundry plans and paper. Two mahogany chairs, dark leather covered, R. and L. of table. Large studio posing chair, velvet (or leather) covered, R. C. Brand new travelling trunk with spring clasps and lock and key. Three cardboard dress boxes, tied up with string. Pocket knife. Two new dresses (serge or cloth) of light and different colors. Fur mantle. Deed, in envelope. Roll of pictures on canvas (strapped up). Four, strong chairs of various shapes and coverings thus:—One (highbacked) down R. below door, one up L. C. at back. One arm-chair, up L. under window, and one down L. Large extending easel down L. Iron stove, with pipe going through wall up R. Oak dresser or hat rack, in alcove, L. of centre door. Plaster bust, on square pedestal, up L. Plaster cast on wall, up R. Around room, on floor, leaning against walls, are several pictures on stretchers without frames and several empty frames. Outside centre door, "hoofs." Latch-lock and key for door C.

LIMES PLOT.

ACT III. (MISS LESSON'S STUDIO.)

Perches as Act 1.

Left stage.

1 open, three quarter box, white clear on sky of backing to window.

Left flies.

1 dark amber, open lens, flood street stage cloth, outside door C.

Up Stage L. C.

One extra dark amber, lens light, spotted and thrown through coach door.

THE PRICE OF MONEY.

ACT IV. (JOE'S STUDY.)

Same as Act 1, except :—

Pair of dark colored, wooden steps, (five treads) with upright hand support on top. The oak table up R. moved round, up at back, out of way of steps. The typewriting table moved out to C. a little. The cover put over typewriting machine, and newspaper removed. The office table moved 2 feet more centre. Note that the telegram forms and pencil and photograph frame are on table. Coal scuttle set well back to wall. Lower end of mantel shelf free for leaning on. Fire well alight. Deed for Joe (no envelope).

LIMES PLOT.

ACT IV. (JOE'S STUDY.) (5)

Perches as Act. 1.

Fire “

Right Stage. One open, three quarter box, Sunset
(medium amber and salmon mixed)
on back cloth.

Left Stage. One “ “ “

THE PRICE OF MONEY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—JOE TREMBLETT'S *study in his house in Camden Town. It is a large, rather bare apartment, right at the top—half attic, half studio. There is one big window at back, looking over roofs and chimneys; a great table is in the centre, covered with books and papers; in front of fire a heavy, old-fashioned chair, the covering worn off in places, showing the dull brown material beneath. On a small side table is a typewriter. Nailed on the walls are a few cheap photographs of Italian Old Masters—also two engravings in black panels, one of Whistler's Portrait of his Mother, the other of Thomas Carlyle. An old oak desk. Ranged along two shelves, evidently the work of an amateur carpenter, are numbers of well-thumbed books. In the room is a great jar, filled with daffodils. Although it is May, a fire is burning in the grate. There is only one door—at L., back.*

(*As the Curtain rises, MAY, a sweet-faced girl of seventeen, is seated up R., in front of the small table, tapping away energetically at the typewriter. She has a newspaper before her, from which she is evidently copying. JOHN COLLIS, after pause, comes in—a tall man, wearing a long, rather ragged moustache, with a heavy, bloated face. MAY does not notice him, and goes on with her work.*)

COLLIS. (*up L.*) Hullo, kiddie! Where's your pa?

MAY. (*seated up R. Stopping and turning round*) He's not back yet, Uncle John. But he'll be here soon.

COLLIS. Have I toiled up four flights in vain! (*Pause*) (*He goes to the cupboard*) Locked! And some idiot pretends that it's fascinating to stand in front of a locked door!

MAY. Only when you don't know what's behind it, Uncle John! But as you *do* know—

COLLIS. Well, how's the typewriting? How many words a minute?

MAY. (*seated*) Only forty so far—but I hope soon—

COLLIS. (*gets to her up C. at back, pointing to the paper she has in front of her*) What is it you're doing?

MAY. It's the wonderful speech Lord Rosebery made yesterday—

COLLIS. (*grunting*) Ugh! So you're interested in politics, eh?

MAY. No.—(*gazing out*)—only, as I type it, I feel as though it were I—I, the orator, looking before me at the great sea of faces—

COLLIS. And feeling pretty sick, I can tell you—

MAY. (*turning to him*) Oh! to be a man, and have the power!

COLLIS. (*up R. top of table. Sneering*) Yes—it's a fine thing to be a man, and have the power! I've been a man for forty-nine years—and next time, please, I want to be a big dog, or a canary.

MAY. (*reproachfully*) Uncle John!

COLLIS. (*turning away*) That's all right—you go on with your work, and look at that sea of faces!

MAY. (*rises*) How is it you've never had any ambition, Uncle John?

COLLIS. (*bringing her down R. pedantically*) I yield a melancholy acquiescence to the unnatural decrees of an incontrovertible injustice. (*He turns her to him*) How do you like that?

MAY. (*shaking her head*) I don't know what it means.

COLLIS. It's literature, my child—literature. (*Hands on her shoulders*) Very few men talk literature—I am one of them! So you're ambitious, eh?

MAY. (*stoutly*) Yes, I am.

COLLIS. (*getting across to c. Sniggering*) Well—so was your pa.

MAY. (*warmly*) And hasn't he written some wonderful novels?

COLLIS. Oh yes—we all write wonderful novels—that nobody buys—and then we have to provide for our family—and are glad to get three hundred a year as assistant editor to a weekly twaddletub! (*sits on table*) There's ambition for you!

MAY. (*protesting*) Papa—("surely" is expressed)

COLLIS. Papa's a great man, I know. I wish I'd married—I'd have children to admire me, too.

MAY. You'd have had to work then, Uncle John.

COLLIS. Work! Am I not a poet? When did you hear of poets working? (*chucking her under her chin*) Why don't you admire my poetry?

MAY. I'm not allowed to read it, Uncle John.

COLLIS. Well—at least you've something to look forward to. (*pompously*) One book—one slender volume—(*door opened*)—contains the soul of John Collis!

(MARTHA enters, hurriedly. She is a pleasant-faced woman of thirty-eight, prettily but inexpensively dressed.)

COLLIS. Hullo, Martha! You look excited!

(MARTHA comes half down. MAY goes up and round top of table to MARTHA—then both come down L.—arm in arm.)

MARTHA. (*flurried and annoyed at finding him there*) John—

COLLIS. Rent? No—can't be—I've not had a summons—

MARTHA. (*proudly*) We are never behind with our rent; and owe no man a penny. (*crosses over front of him to R. with MAY*)

COLLIS. (*turning R. to MARTHA*) Aren't you ashamed to air such vicious principles before a young and receptive mind? (*still on table*)

MARTHA. (*frowning*) What do you want, John?

COLLIS. To see Joe. (*turning to MARTHA*) And—incidentally—to have the key of that cupboard.

(*MAY seated on left arm of chair, her right arm over MARTHA'S right shoulder.*)

MARTHA. (*emphatically*) Certainly not.

COLLIS. (*on table*) Gods of Hospitality! And I am her elder brother!

MARTHA. And I don't know when Joe will be back.

COLLIS. Witness's statement distinctly at variance with that of kiddie.

MARTHA. Come in later if you like. I've something important to say to Joe.

COLLIS. When you write your reminiscences, kiddie, tell the world how eminent poet was treated by his relations. (*COLLIS gets down off table*)

MARTHA. (*seated chair R.*) Poet! You've not written a line—for twenty years!

COLLIS. Poetry, Martha, went out with the crinoline. Shall—(*top L. of table*)—I offer my nectar to a generation that wallows in small-beer? And, talking of beer—(*he looks enquiringly at her*)

(*She shakes her head. MAY also shakes her head.*)

Ah! not even beer! Well. (*going out*) I shall leave you. (*turns*) But I shall return.

MARTHA. (*turning to him. Scornfully*) To borrow money!

COLLIS. (*going*) You have a prophetic instinct, Martha (*turns*) that would be invaluable on the Sporting Press. (*at door*)

MARTHA. And you're not ashamed—

(MAY "*enjoys*" scene, in touch with MARTHA.)

COLLIS. (*at door*) I have merely applied the Times system to loans. Instead of Joe lending me five pounds at once—which might have embarrassed him—he pays me half a crown weekly, and received my gratitude, delivered free, with the first instalment. Au revoir! (*he goes, jauntily*)

(MAY *rises—gets up* L. *courtesies derisively.*)

MARTHA. (*seated* R. *Disgustedly*) Ugh! He's your uncle—but well there! To come cadging for half-crowns on poor Joe!—May, you didn't tell him Uncle Willie had been here?

MAY. (*gets* R. *and sinks on her knees* L. *of arm-chair*) No, mother. But why did Uncle Willie come, and why wasn't I to tell? And look—(*she produces a sovereign*)—look what he gave me! (*kneeling*)

MARTHA. (*amazed*) A sovereign! Uncle Willie gave you that!

MAY. (*kneeling by chair—nodding*) Yes. And he said—just to show you what money's like.

MARTHA. (*shaking her head*) Ah! Well, remember—not a word to your father.

MAY. No—I'll be very careful—(*puts coin back into pocket*)—Mother, we haven't *very* nice uncles, have we?

MARTHA. No! *My* brother, who won't work, and borrows money; and your father's brother, who does nothing *but* work, and *save* money. (*throws*

her arms around MAY and draws her to her) Well, never mind! May, dear, when your father comes I want a word with him—so you'll give Tommy and Alice their dinner, and see they go off to school and don't quarrel—

MAY. Yes, mother.

MARTHA. You'll have to be careful with Sarah—she's in one of her tantrums again—

MAY. Oh! I'm sorry!

MARTHA. The butcher's boy has left—and she seems to imagine I've kidnapped him!—You've been hard at work, May?

MAY. Oh yes—I'm getting on nicely, I think—Mother, why *did* Uncle Willie give me that sovereign? (*bending forward*)

MARTHA. He told you—to see what money was like. Oh! I understand!

MAY. (*puzzled*) He has never given me anything before—

MARTHA. And never will again—you may be quite sure of that—

MAY. (*eagerly*) And may I do what I like with the sovereign, mother?

MARTHA. (*hands under MAY's chin*) Whatever you like! Though I know where it will go!

MAY. (*eagerly*) Mother, mother, the photograph of that Velasquez father was so eager to have!

MARTHA. (*wistfully*) You love him more than you do me, May.

MAY. (*kissing her*) Mother, the dear old dad! We can't love him too much! (*a knock*)

MARTHA. Come in.

(*Enter MISS LESSON. She is an elderly lady, with gray hair, combed straight back—and wears a black garment, something like a curé's frock, hanging straight down to the ankles, without any ornament, or attempt at ornament, whatsoever. The dress is cut short; and she has square shoes, of the sensible*

order, with plain black buckles. Her hat is merely a covering for the head; and, in its absolute simplicity, may have been bought and have been fashionable, twenty years ago. Her appearance, for all its eccentricity, is distinctly pleasing and womanly—in no single particular does she ape male costume—her face is rather determined, but with kindness and a keen sense of humor. She is brusque and abrupt in her speech, but her voice is singularly melodious; and she has about her the unmistakable cachet of the “grande dame.”)

(surprised) Miss Lesson! *(she goes eagerly to her below table)*

(MAY rises, gets R. C.)

MISS LESSON. *(L. C.) (shaking hands)* The lady who let me in refused to do more than admit me. She grunted ‘upstairs’—so I came upstairs. How are you?

MARTHA. Oh, Miss Lesson, I’m so sorry! This is one of Sarah’s bad days.

MISS LESSON. Don’t mention it, Mrs. Tremblett! Not always good-tempered myself—don’t see why servants should be. *(crosses to MAY)* Well, my pretty little May! I’ve—*(sits arm-chair)*—come to say good-bye.

MARTHA. Good-bye?

MISS LESSON. *(sitting)* Yes. I’m going to Canada—with Walter.

MARTHA. *sits R. of table)* What! Not for good, surely! *(MAY gets stool)*

MISS LESSON. That’s what he says. And as I’ve been a model aunt to the boy ever since he was in short frocks—

MAY. *(sitting on stool by armchair R.)* Why does he go, Miss Lesson? A peer—in the House of Lords—he can speak, whenever he wants to—

MISS LESSON. *(seated in armchair R. by fire)*

Only there's no one to listen, my dear—Chancellor asleep on the Woolsack—might as well make a speech on the top of the Himalayas! Besides, he always has been fond of farming—and he has bought two thousand acres at some unpronounceable place—

MARTHA. (*seated R. of table*) (*confidentially to MISS LESSON*) Well—perhaps he'll marry out there!

MISS LESSON. (*shaking her head*) No. He never will marry. He's the type of the perfect lover. Though there are others. Different men love differently, and different things. But anyway, Walter's constant. I'm sorry enough—

MAY. (*opening wide eyes*) Constant? (*turns to MARTHA*) Lord Cardew? To whom? (*turns to MISS LESSON*) And why doesn't she—

MISS LESSON. (*patting her cheek*) Ah, my dear little May, that was not meant for you! But there still are some men who can only love once in their life—

MARTHA. And you really are going with him?

MISS LESSON. Oh yes! One place or another—

MAY. You'll miss your painting, Miss Lesson?

MISS LESSON. Oh, I'll work our there! Wonderful country, they tell me—lots of stuff! And I mean to milk the cows, you know—and if they won't let me I'll—paint 'em!

MAY. Oh, Miss Lesson, I should like to go with you!

MARTHA. And leave us, May?

MAY. (*rising and getting R. C.—close above MARTHA*) Mother! As if you thought that! But how lovely if we could all get away! Camden Town is so ugly!

MISS LESSON. Wait till the Fairy Prince comes, little May! When he's there—Camden town or Canada—it's always—Fairyland! Isn't it, Mrs. Tremblett? Tell me, will your husband be long? (*comes down R.*)

MARTHA. (C.) I'm expecting him every minute.

MISS LESSON. I hope he'll come soon. I've *such* a lot to do!

MAY. (*getting to* MISS L.) (*standing up* R. C.) Of course. You must say good-bye to all your friends!

MISS LESSON. (R.) I've only acquaintances, my dear, of whom some are more intimate than others. Don't let's use the word 'friend' too lightly. I had one, and she's dead. (*hands on* MAY'S *shoulders*)

MAY. (R. C.) Aren't *we* friends of yours, Miss Lesson?

MISS LESSON. (*affectionately*) *Very* intimate acquaintances! Oh, I'm a great stickler for precision!

(JOE *comes in.*)

MAY. (*running to him. Going below table takes* JOE'S *left hand*) Here he is! Here's Daddy!

(MARTHA *gets up* R. *of table to* MAY *at back then to top of table.*)

MISS LESSON. Ah, Mr. Tremblett! You're just in time—to receive my parting benediction!

(MAY *at left of table, then up at back* C. *with* MARTHA.)

JOE. (*coming across* R. *to* MISS LESSON. *Shaking hands with her*) Why? You're not going away?

MISS LESSON. (R. *nodding*) With Walter—to Canada—farming.

JOE. (R. C.) (*amazed*) What!

MISS LESSON. Fact! There's a shop you know, in Cockspur Street, where they sell land across the counter, as though it were ribbons; and as they can't send it home to *us*, we're going to *it*.

JOE. Wonderful! And when do you come back?

(MARTHA and MAY come down to left top corner of table.)

MISS LESSON. At present we say never—which may of course mean next year. I told my stock-broker I'd return when there was a genuine boom in Kaffirs. He said his grandson would be happy to receive me.

JOE. (*laughing*) Let's hope there'll be a Stock Exchange handy.

MISS LESSON. (*merrily*) Make me very unhappy if there isn't! I should miss my little gambles. I invested my last five pounds yesterday—bought two Charteredds—

JOE. Do you think it quite wise to go off like this?

MISS LESSON. Had my doubts—till I found all my swagger relations disapproved—*that* reassured me! Well, I'll be off. Shan't wait for Walter—

JOE. He's coming this morning?

MISS LESSON. Oh yes. We start to-morrow.

JOE.

MARTHA. } To-morrow!

(MARTHA and MAY come down L. C.)

MISS LESSON. My motto—strike while the iron's heating!

MAY. (*reproachfully*) And you only come to us now!

MISS LESSON. Always leave the best grape to the last!

JOE. What time do you start? I'll be at the station—

MISS LESSON. 4.05, from Euston—we go straight on board. But don't see us off—hate being seen off—feel like the man who apologized for taking so long to die. Good-bye, Mr. Tremblett.

JOE. Good-bye, Miss Lesson. (*first shake of hands*) And how about Art?

MISS LESSON. I'll send home masterpieces, you'll see! I still keep *your* autographs, you know—among the doubtfuls. There's no telling—you may be famous yet.

JOE. (*smiling*) Why not? The assistant editor of a weekly magazine—

MISS LESSON. When you're dead, somebody may start a boom in your novels.

(MARTHA L. C. with MAY below her)

JOE. There'll be a boom in Kaffirs first!

MISS LESSON. (*shaking hands*) Who knows? Well, good-bye and good luck! (*she holds hand*) Famous or not, you're a fine man, and I'm proud to have known you.

JOE. (*simply*) Thank you, Miss Lesson.

(JOE gets above table to door—holds it open.)

MISS LESSON. Your father was a fine man, too—it's a pity his other son—(*Releases hands*)—Well, (*turning to MARTHA*)—good-bye, Mrs. Tremblett—and good luck to you, too.

(MARTHA going gets up L. C.)

(*Taking MAY to her*) Now please remain here, both of you—I want a few words with my little May, all to myself.

(*She passes her arm around MAY, and goes to the door, JOE and MARTHA accompanying her. MARTHA leans over bannisters. When she has gone MARTHA shouts down the stairs "A pleasant voyage! Come back soon!" to which MISS LESSON replies off, "Who knows? Good-bye."*)

(JOE and MARTHA come in, and shut the door.)

MARTHA. Oh, Joe, poor Lilian!

JOE. (*coming down*) Don't let's speak about Lilian—

MARTHA. You will tell her?

JOE. (*round table to chair R. sits*) Of course I shall tell her. It's the best thing, perhaps. But no more of that. We shall miss the dear old lady.

MARTHA. A queer notion at her age! And I was always hoping that she might do something for May! (*coming and standing L. of table*)

JOE. (*seated R. of table. Surprised*) May?

MARTHA. Why, yes—she's so fond of her! and as May's nearly seventeen—(*getting round top of table*)

JOE. Heaven! Are you already thinking of marrying off my little May!

MARTHA. You don't want her to be single all her life, Joe? (*sits top of table*)

JOE. All her life! The little thing's just beginning her life!

MARTHA. (*top of table*) And a fine beginning too, having to go out as a typist!

JOE. (*stoutly*) It does no woman harm to have to earn her own living. That makes her independent—if she marries then, she marries from choice, and not from necessity.

MARTHA. Oh, theory's all very fine. (*sits top of table*)

JOE. Come, old girl, don't grizzle! And it was your own idea, wasn't it? It was you who suggested it! See now, if you're good, I'll take you to look at your diamonds this afternoon—

MARTHA. (*leaning over to him, laughing*) In Tiffany's shop-window!

JOE. Haven't we agreed to regard that shop-window as our safe—and don't they belong to you because we imagine they do—and haven't Tif-

fany's all the trouble of looking after them, and dusting them, and keeping off the burglars? And as you'd hate to *wear* diamonds, being of a simple mind—

MARTHA. Try me!

JOE. It's ever so much more comfortable having them there, in the shop-window. (*with a sudden change of voice*) Martha! I've some good news.

MARTHA. Good news, Joe? (*starting back*)

JOE. Handisyde called me into his room this morning, told me he was very satisfied with me, made my appointment permanent, and raised my salary fifty pounds a year.

MARTHA. Oh! I'm glad—(*bending to him*)—but permanent, Joe!

JOE. (*nodding*) It means we shall have no more anxiety as regards the future.

MARTHA. (*seated top of table, arm on his shoulder*) But your dreams, your ambitions, the books you were to write—

JOE. (*in loud whisper*) I don't give one damn for the lot—not one solitary Prussian damn! I've the best wife in the world—

MARTHA. (*nestles down, head on shoulder*) Dear Joe!

JOE. And the best children in the world—and my dreams and ambitions can go hang themselves on the first rusty nail in the nearest asylum! Martha, they've made my increase of salary retrospective—

MARTHA. (*laughing*) I've met that word, I'm sure, but I don't think I was introduced.

JOE. It means I shall get twelve pounds ten extra this quarter in a lump sum—

MARTHA. Ah!

JOE. And *that* means a new dress for you and May, and a theatre for us all—

MARTHA. (*leaning to him again, hand on shoulder*) And for you—?

JOE. For me? I'll tell you. I'll have a pound of the best tobacco to be got for love or money! Give me a kiss, old girl! (*he throws his arms round her and kisses her boisterously*)

(MAY comes in, with LORD CARDEW. MAY L. of WALTER—*his left arm over her shoulder*. JOSEPH and MARTHA rise. JOSEPH gets R. C. and MARTHA R.)

MAY. Father, father—Lord Cardew!

WALTER. Joe!

(MAY shuts door and comes down L. C.)

JOE. Walter! (*he goes eagerly to him C.*)

(*They shake hands.*)

WALTER. (*crosses to MARTHA*) How are you, Mrs. Tremblett? (*turning to JOE and MAY*) You've heard the news, May tells me.

MARTHA. Yes—and we're so sorry! Why, you've been away nearly a year—and now you're off again!

WALTER. Yes, I'm a restless spirit.

MAY. (L. C.) Where have you been, Lord Cardew?

WALTER. Tarpon-fishing—and climbing mountains—

(JOSEPH'S arm round MAY.)

MAY. Oh! how splendid! I would so love—

MARTHA. (*crosses front of MAY and takes her right hand*) Come, May—let's leave them. (*to WALTER, over her shoulder*) You'd like a word with Joe, I know. (*going out*)

MAY. (*at door*) I'll see you before you go, Lord Cardew—shan't I?

WALTER. Oh yes, of course—I'll come down and say good-bye.

(MARTHA and MAY go—MAY looking back.)

JOE. So you're off to Canada? (*sitting on L. corner of table*)

WALTER. (*sitting*) Yes. I suppose it must sound pretty foolish? (*R. of table*) (*puts hat on table*)

JOE. I don't know. How long have you been back?

WALTER. Three weeks, that's all.

JOE. And you're tired of town already?

WALTER. (*seated R. of table*) Yes—I'm always tired of town. And I'm tired of tarpon fishing and climbing mountains, and generally of killing time. When you come to think of it, I'm thirty-two—and I'd like to *do* something. I'm sick of hanging around. One's hands are tied over here.

JOE. (*seated on table L.*) Yes.

WALTER. So we're going, Joe—the old aunt and I. We've booked our passage as Susan Lesson and Walter Dalmon—we'll drop the Honourable and we'll drop the Earl. I ought to have come to you before, but I've had all my affairs to settle.

JOE. Of course.

WALTER. (*rolling his gloves into a ball*) We've known each other a good long time, haven't we? It's a queer thing—your people stewards of the property, father to son, for more than two hundred years—and now no Tremblett at Cardew Towers—and soon no Dalmon either!

JOE. These things happen!

WALTER. It would have been quite a blow to your father, wouldn't it?

JOE. Dear old man—yes! (*he takes up photo*)

from table, and looks at it) How proud he was of you all! Well, what do you mean to do with the place?

WALTER. Let it, if I can—but that's not easy—There are some people wanting to buy—but I won't sell. *(leans back)*

JOE. You won't? *(puts photo down on table)*.

WALTER. Hang it, no! The place has been in our family so long! *(pause)* Do you know, I've an idea your brother wants it?

JOE. *(surprised)* Willie?

WALTER. *(leaning forward on stick)* They're his solicitors, I fancy—I'm pretty sure. I saw the man and asked him point-blank—was he acting for Mr. Tremblett? He denied it, of course—but I could see he was lying. Why should *he* want the Towers?

JOE. I can't imagine.

WALTER. He hasn't told you?

JOE. I see him once every year or so.

WALTER. He would like to be Lord of the Manor, perhaps, where he used to play in the kitchen. *(puts stick on table)*

(JOE laughs.)

(with sudden recollection) I beg pardon, Joe! *(pats JOE on knee)*

JOE. *(cheerfully)* Not at all. It was a beautiful kitchen. *(laughs)* But Willie's not sentimental.

WALTER. *(still playing with his gloves)* No. It's probably only another way of showing his hatred for me.

JOE. *(quietly)* Why should he hate you?

WALTER. *(pause. Looking up)* Hasn't he married the woman I love? *(pause)* That's reason enough I suppose. *(rises and gets L. back to JOE—moment's silence)* Have you seen her lately, Joe?

JOE. I manage to go there every week—when Willie's out.

WALTER. (*his back to* JOSEPH TREMBLETT)
(L. C.) He doesn't treat her any better?

JOE. Lilian rarely mentions him—but of course he's not changed. She's very wise—she makes the best of things.

WALTER. How's she looking? (*turns up stage*)

JOE. Just the same. And she never complains. Oh! she's brave!

WALTER. (*turns to him*) Does she speak of me?

JOE. (*he takes hold of* WALTER'S *arm*) (*pause*)
. . . We do (*pause*) speak of you sometimes,
Walter . . . (*crosses R. to fire*)

WALTER. Has she got over the little boy's death?
(*gets up L. C.—hand on back of chair*)

JOE. (*at fire*) It's more than two years ago—

WALTER. (*standing L. of table*) He was all she had in the world—her one child. It wasn't a pretty baby—but—how she loved it!

JOE. Yes. Poor Lilian! (*sits in armchair*)

WALTER. I've not seen her since then, Joe—not had a line from her——

JOE. Willie made her promise—

WALTER. (*standing L. of table*) That's always been such a mystery to me! I used to call on her At Home days, and listen to Company Promoters' wives talking scandal and shares. (*leaning on table*) I've not been alone with her, since she was married. Then why?

JOE. My dear Walter, when he forbade you the house, I asked him the reason. He merely chuckled. That's all the answer I got.

WALTER. He can't have been jealous. A man who treats his wife like that can't love her. (*coming R.*)

JOE. (*leans back in armchair*) The baby's death made a great difference to him. He adored the child.

WALTER. And since then, of course—(*crosses to fire*)—he's worse?

JOE. He hasn't improved.

WALTER. (*hand on JOE's shoulder*) I often think, Joe, that you, as the elder brother—(*sits on stool*)

JOE. I've no more influence over Willie than a fly that crawls over his desk. I've no money—and money's the one thing he cares for, or values. (WALTER *leans forward*) It has become a disease, like drink or opium. There's nothing in common between us. If it weren't for his wife, I'd never go near his house.

WALTER. She doesn't come here?

JOE. (*smoking pipe*) No. He won't let her. (*staring into fire*)

WALTER. Why?

JOE. I've told you—he gives no reasons.

WALTER. And she obeys?

JOE. (*turns to him*) What can she do against Willie?

WALTER. And she's chained to that man till one of them dies! (*rise*) Isn't it monstrous?

JOE. It's life.

WALTER. (*nodding. Round top of table*) Life—yes. And her father, the old Dean, who preached the beautiful sermons that made all the ladies weep—he was life (*sits L. of table*)—too, wasn't he? He sold Lilian to Master Willie——

JOE. Willie offered to pay his debts.

WALTER. (*seated L. of table*) Yes—and I couldn't! How he pushed up his spectacles and ruffled his silvery hair, when I asked him for Lilian! He had other views, he said—other views. We had loved each other, I told him, since we were children——

JOE. (*interrupting—Rises*) No good dwelling on the past, Walter——

WALTER. (*seated L. of table. Fiercely*) No

good! Ah! but I do!—I do—and I hope there's some warm corner in Hell, from which the old Dean may see how his daughter has prospered!

JOE. (*smoking pipe. Comes to table c.*) That's a question for the theologians. Though Hell's rather out of date.

WALTER. She obeyed her father—now she obeys her husband——

JOE. Yes. Some women are like that.

WALTER. I was a younger son then. I hope the old Dean knows I've come into the title. (*nursing his leg*)

JOE. (*back half turned to audience*) (*Still c.*) They say the Devil has a sense of humour—he may have told him.

(*Pause—a moment's silence.*)

WALTER. (*rises, gets c. to JOE quietly*) You'll stand by her, Joe? (*hand on lapel of JOE's coat*)

JOE. Always.

WALTER. Tell her I'm going—but that I haven't changed—and *shall* never change—that I'm there, when she wants me—and that I'm going away, because I can't endure living in the same city, and not seeing her. Tell her that I—that I—(*turns from him a step l.*)—but she knows! I won't write to her—she and I—have no need of letters. . . Here's my address in Canada—don't lose it.

(*He hands JOE an envelope, which JOE takes and puts in his wallet which he takes from drawer of table.*)

(*takes hat and stick. Cross up l. c.*) I shall hear from you?

JOE. (*up behind table*) Yes.

WALTER. (*up l. c.*) I shouldn't go, if you

weren't here. But I can trust you—I can, Joe, can't I?

JOE. (*top of table*) You can.

WALTER. (L. C.) And—in case of necessity—if he made things too—hard—for her—you'd intervene?

JOE. Don't let's exaggerate. He's merely the ordinary—(*at table, putting letter away*)—kind of domestic bully—there are lots like him.

WALTER. (*up L.*) At least most men care for their wife!

JOE. He prefers money. But even then he's not unique.

WALTER. Not unique—no. But there's something wrong, somewhere.

JOE. The world wants putting right, Walter—but we can't do it.

WALTER. No—we just shrug our shoulders and say "Poor Lilian"—Well, I must be going. Good-bye, Joe! (*comes to JOE up c.*)

JOE. I shall be at the Station to-morrow.

WALTER. Don't, if you're busy. And stop here—I'll say good-bye to the children. (*a step going to door with JOE*)

(*As they join hands, the door opens and WILLIAM TREMBLETT comes in. He stops awkwardly on seeing WALTER*)

JOE. Willie!

WILLIE. (*comes down L. a little, mumbling*) Your fool of a servant said you were alone.

(*WALTER looks at him, quietly, then deliberately turns his back.*)

WALTER. (*to JOE*) Good-bye! (*going*)

JOE. (*going up to door together shake hands—as he accompanies him to the door*) I shall be at the station, Walter!

(WALTER goes.)

(JOE gets top of table and turns to WILLIE, who has been contemplatively watching WALTER'S departure.)

JOE. (*pause to WILLIE*) Well?

WILLIE. (*producing a snuff box and tapping it, down L.*) Strange I should meet the lordling, wasn't it? What was he saying good-bye for, with such emphasis?

JOE. (*sits top of table*) He's going to Canada.

WILLIE. (*with sudden violence*) The deuce he is! When?

JOE. To-morrow!

WILLIE. (*gets to L. of table. Staggered*) To-morrow! (*wildly*) When does he start? What time?

JOE. In the afternoon. Do *you* want to see him off, too?

(*Arranging papers, etc., on table.*)

WILLIE. (*standing L. of table. With a great sigh of relief*) In the afternoon—ah! (*his whole manner changes—he becomes roughly genial, and offers his snuff-box*) Have a pinch?

JOE. Heavens—no! Why do *you* take that beastly—(*puts MS on chair R.*)—stuff?

WILLIE. So professional! Old fashioned family solicitor—eh? Besides, gives you time to think. (*takes snuff*) Some men cultivate a stammer—I take snuff.

JOE. Well—you haven't come here to tell me that?

WILLIE. Your welcome's not particularly cordial, Joe—is it now? (*cross R. c. and then to fire*)

JOE. Are you bringing out some new swindle, or reconstructing one of the old? I've no financial influence—if I had, you know what I'd say about you.

WILLIE. (*his back to fire, chuckling*) Still so severe on the poor Company Promoter! Besides, I don't promote—I only advise—Well, how are things going with you? Getting on, eh? (*turns to him a step R. C.*)

JOE. I've had a rise. My salary now is three hundred and fifty a year.

WILLIE. (*with affected admiration. Hands behind back*) You don't say so! As much as that! Wonderful profession, literature!

JOE. What are you worth, Willie? Fifty thousand—or a hundred thousand—or what?

WILLIE. (*up R. C.*) Oh, nothing like that, Joe—nothing like it! I wish it were! But I've quite a nice little pile!

JOE. What good does it do you?

WILLIE. Power. Money buys—and the world has a lot to sell.

JOE. (*arranging papers*) What sickens me most is that people who know you are rich, ask me, almost enviously, whether I am your brother.

WILLIE. (*R. C. chuckling*) Shocking, isn't it? But don't let that worry you! You've your ideals, and I mine. You like fame, and I money. We're both rather fools, aren't we? Everyone's a bit of a fool. So there you are. (*change of tone*) Now let's talk. (*gets to R. of table*)

JOE. Go on.

WILLIE. I suppose you'll let me sit down.

JOE. Why not?

WILLIE. Thanks. May I dislodge this—master-piece? (*he removes a pile of manuscripts from a chair, throws it on the table and sits R. of table, then, bending forward, his voice becoming sharp and incisive*) Would you like to earn five thousand pounds?

JOE. (*staring*) Five thousand pounds?

WILLIE. Yes. Would you?

JOE. Honestly?

WILLIE. (*seated*) Quite.

JOE. How?

WILLIE. It will take you half-an-hour. Will you?

JOE. What have I to do?

WILLIE. (*sullenly*) Use your influence on an obstinate woman.

JOE. Lilian?

WILLIE. (*nodding*) Lilian? Yes.

JOE. And you'll pay me five thousand for that?

WILLIE. If you *succeed*—yes, I will.

JOE. (*pause. Scornfully*) What dirty scheme have you on foot now, Master Willie? It must be pretty bad if poor Lilian dares to refuse!

WILLIE. (*snorting*) Bad! And poor Lilian, of course! It's always poor Lilian!

JOE. (*facing him*) You've hammered obedience into her—

WILLIE. Have I! When I tell you that she refuses.

JOE. Why? What is it?

WILLIE. (*impressively*) (*confidentially*) (*pause*) Joe, I want to buy a property that belongs to the man who went out just now—

JOE. Cardew Towers! *Ah!* Then it *was* you!

WILLIE. (*biting his nails*) He suspected?

JOE. He thought they were your solicitors.

WILLIE. (*pause*) Well, so much the better! Joe, fifteen thousand acres go with the Towers, and there's coal on the land.

JOE. *Ah!* that's it?

WILLIE. (*with emphatic contrast of tone*) Yes. I've had secret information—no one knows. It's one of the finest coalfields in the kingdom! I've offered a handsome figure—Cardew, the ass, won't sell.

JOE. So he told me.

WILLIE. I've offered above market value—he refuses—definitely.

JOE. Well?

WILLIE. (*after a moment's pause, doggedly*) So I want Lilian to go and ask him.

JOE. (*pause, pushing back his chair and staring at him*) You—want—Lilian to go and ask him?

WILLIE. (*pettishly*) Is that so wonderful? I do. He would not refuse *her*.

JOE. You think not—ch?

WILLIE. (*sourly*) Cardew loves her, doesn't he?—Curse him, isn't he the kind of eternal lover, waiting for them both to die to ride off together on a broomstick?

JOE. Is that why you forbade him the house?

WILLIE. . . I didn't know then that there was coal on his land. . .

JOE. (*seated top of table*) Of course. That makes a difference.

WILLIE. Besides, I had stood it quite long enough——

JOE. Stood it—stood what? They had scarcely seen each other since you—bought her——

WILLIE. (*fiercely*) Bought her! If I did, let me tell you I made a precious bad bargain!

JOE. (*rises and crosses to fire*) You can't expect all your investments to turn out well.

WILLIE. Oh! of course, it's so easy for *you*! (*turns head towards him*) Why did I marry her, do you think, or buy her, as you call it? Was it such a catch to be the son-in-law of that bankrupt old humbug, the Dean?

JOE. (*quietly leaning elbows on mantel-shelf*) She told you about Walter——

WILLIE. I believed it was all boy and girl nonsense. Well—it . . . wasn't. (*he turns on JOE and speaks with passion*) Do *you* know what it means to be married to—to live with—a woman who—who—(*change of tone*) (*faces front*) Ah! Well, never mind all that! I've swallowed my pill—but—it took some swallowing! (*change again*) And how would *you* have liked to have him—hanging around?

JOE. And yet you want her to go to him now!

WILLIE. (*doggedly*) Yes. I do.

JOE. Although——

WILLIE. Don't you worry yourself. I know what I'm doing.

JOE. Because of the money?

WILLIE. (*turns head towards him*) The money. Precisely. Let's have no highfalutin'!

JOE. You told me just now——

WILLIE. (*wildly*) It's the only way, I tell you—(*rises*) Besides, he's going to Canada—and let's hope he'll stop there. (*turns to him*) And we know Lilian, don't we? (*a step or two R. C.*) What a fuss, what a fuss! Cardew's staying with that mad old aunt of his—and she's Lilian's godmother——

JOE. She hasn't seen Lilian since her marriage to you——

WILLIE. (*R. C. turns to him sharply*) What has that to do with it? I've put the whole matter before Lilian——

JOE. Have you mentioned the coal?

WILLIE. (*snarling*) Is it likely? (*return to R. C.*) But I've told her she'd be rendering me a very great service. And I promised her an allowance——

JOE. You've been keeping her pretty close——

WILLIE. Close! She's the kind of woman who'd give all she had to the first beggar who asked her!

JOE. Hard on you, that.

WILLIE. (*C*) She refuses.—No reasons—she won't! When I argue—tears! (*turns away*)

JOE. I see.

WILLIE. (*turns back sharply to JOE*) Very well then—that's where I want you—to earn your five thousand pounds.

JOE. The pay's good.

WILLIE. I'll put it in writing if you like—(*a step to JOE*)—though I think you can trust my word——

JOE. (*smoking pipe*) Yes. That's your one quality—and it's wonderful enough, too——

WILLIE. (*eagerly. A step or two nearer him*) She'll listen to *you*—she believes in *you*—she'll do what you tell her. I've drawn up a deed for her to take to him—and when she brings that back, *signed*, I'll give you five thousand pounds.

JOE (*turning to him*) I've never had much respect for you, Willie——

WILLIE. Hang your respect! Who cares? (*turns and gets down c.*)

JOE. But this thing is *so* contemptible—(*puts pipe down on mantel-shelf*)

WILLIE. Oh! do drop those moral maxims of yours, for once! They've done a great deal for you, haven't they? They bring you three hundred a year!

JOE. Three hundred and fifty. Let's be accurate.

WILLIE. (*a step to him*) Which means that you're practically a pauper——

JOE. (*hands in trousers pockets*) With clean hands.

WILLIE. And a stainless conscience, and the rest of the flap-doodle! Well, what I ask you to do won't hurt your conscience, or leave even a grease-spot on it. And if it does, you'll find that five thousand pounds wipe off a lot of spots! (*getting away from him c.*)

JOE. No doubt!

WILLIE. (*gets down c.*) Come round this afternoon. It's Lilian's At Home day—but I'll be there, and see you're alone with her. Make her write to Cardew that she'll call to-morrow—(*going—gets L. c.*)

JOE. (*half turn—with sudden violence*) Get out!

WILLIE. (*L. c. turns—staring*) What? ? ?

JOE. I've told you to go. You're wasting your time—and isn't time money?

(WILLIE *makes a movement of anger, moves a step to c.*)

(*The door opens and MARTHA comes in, looking anxious and worried.*)

JOE. (*at fire*) I won't try to explain. What's the use? (*he waves to the door*)

MARTHA. (*down L. anxiously*) Joe——

WILLIE. (*crosses to L. C.* MARTHA L. *Triumphantly*) Ah! here's Martha! Martha, speak to this husband of yours, and drive some common-sense into him! I've offered to put five thousand pounds into his pocket—and yours—and you've heard him! (*to JOE*) Talk it over with Martha—(*going*) you can tell her everything. (*turns at door*) I'll expect you this afternoon. (*at door*)

(*He goes, jauntily*)

JOE. (*R. C. With supreme disgust*) The brute!

MARTHA. (*cross from L. C. to him R.*) Why, Joe—what has happened?

JOE. (*moving from her—cross her to table R. Sits*) Oh! don't let's talk of it!

MARTHA. (*following him. Cross behind JOE to R.*) Joe, Joe, you must tell me! Five thousand pounds he said—what for?

JOE. (*gets R. of table and sits*) What for, what for? Good Heavens, I've not thought very highly of this brother of mine—but I never believed him to be quite as—low down—as this!

MARTHA. (*standing over him R.*) Don't work yourself into a passion, Joe. Tell me.

JOE. He has discovered somehow that there's coal on Walter's land, and has been trying to buy. But Walter won't sell. So he wants Lilian to go and ask him——

MARTHA. (*quietly*) Well?

JOE. (*staring amazedly at her*) “Well!” Did you hear what I said? That he wants Lilian to go to Walter——

MARTHA. There's nothing so terrible in that, Joe.

JOE. (*more and more bewildered*) Nothing so terrible! *You* say this! When he admits himself that they're in love with each other?

MARTHA. Lilian's not a young girl—and all that's so long ago! (*gets above him and sits in chair top of table*) Every woman has a romance in her life—this is Lilian's.

JOE. (*seated R. of table*) Ah!—perhaps *you've* one too!

MARTHA. (*patting his hand*) I married *my* romance, Joe! But these five thousand pounds—what is it you have to do?

JOE. Lilian refuses to go—for the first time in her life she has dared to stand up against him! So he imagines *I* will persuade her—I!

MARTHA. (*leans towards him*) You've great influence over her——

JOE. Yes—she trusts me. Poor thing, she has not many friends! She married my brother—I've done what I could. And he believes he can buy *me*, with his five thousand pounds!

MARTHA. Think what the money would mean, Joe!

JOE. (*eagerly*) That's the one thing in the world we *mustn't* think of it! Why, apart from everything else, is it likely I'd help to deceive my friend Walter, who knows nothing about the coal?

MARTHA. (*turns square to table*) That doesn't concern *us*, Joe; *you* are not going to buy the place. And *is* he such a friend of yours after all? You see him so seldom!

JOE. I've known him since he was a boy—and I like him.

MARTHA. (*elbows on table—head on hands*) His people treated your father very badly—he has never done anything for you. You remember, when you tried for that secretaryship—

JOE. (*seated R. of table*) I suppose he didn't

think I was the man for it. And besides, are we only to regard those people as friends who do things for us?

MARTHA. All I mean is, Joe, that we must not be quixotic. (*Arm on Joe's shoulder*) You've nothing to do with the coal, or Lord Cardew—you've merely to persuade Lilian—

JOE. (*scarcely believing his ears*) Merely! (*He looks sorrowfully at her*) Don't say that you'd like me to do it!

MARTHA. (*with feeling*) Ah, Joe, Joe! (*Hand on arm. Arm round neck, kisses him*) I don't like to do *anything* that would hurt you, or that you don't feel to be right! But this is a chance—a wonderful chance—the chance of our lifetime!

JOE. Because of the beastly money? Are *you* going to be like Willie, and put that above everything else in the world?

MARTHA. (*strongly*) Not for myself—I don't care about myself—but we have our *children* to think of. That's our first duty, Joe. See there's our little May growing up—our beautiful little May—and she has to go to the city, and be in a stuffy office from nine till six—

JOE. (*rises goes R. to fire*) Thousands of girls have to do it—

MARTHA. Because their parents can't help themselves, that's all! (*Turns to him in chair*) But is it a healthy existence, do you think, for a young girl? Our May's not very strong—she'll soon grow pale and anaemic—

JOE. (*unhappily*) Why *should* she?

MARTHA. (*rises, only a step up R. C.*) Because she's growing, and should have lots of air, and exercise. Look at the post-office girls behind the counter—how thin and white they are—our May will be like that too!

JOE. (*right elbow on mantel, head on hand, fronting audience R.*) You've never said these things be-

fore—it was your own idea that she should learn typewriting—

MARTHA. (*gets down R. C. then C.*) Because *then* we had no choice—then she *had* to earn her living! But, Joe, do you think she likes it, the poor little thing? (*Sits chair R. of table*) Do you realize how a girl craves, at that age, for a little brightness, a little joy, in her life? And you know how dearly she would have loved to go to College! And there are the others, too, growing up—we shall have soon to think of them. And, Joe, (*rising and coming to JOE*) I've so often wanted to give May some mountain air—instead of our fortnight every year in a third-rate lodging in Hastings, we could take her to Switzerland, couldn't we—give her a real holiday, for once—

JOE. (*turning away and dropping his head*) This is the first time you have flung my poverty at me!

MARTHA. (*goes to him, eagerly, and laying her hand caressingly on his, with her arm round his neck*) Because it's the first time you've had a chance of escape from it! Oh Joe, Joe—I'd never advise a thing I believed to be wrong—but here—what harm could there be?

JOE. He forbade Walter the house—and now he wants her to—

MARTHA. Lilian would do it—for you! I can quite understand, of course, that it won't be—pleasant—but she'll do it—for you!

JOE. (*eying her grimly*) It only strikes you as unpleasant—nothing more?

MARTHA. (*away from him slightly*) Of course, nothing more! You men always exaggerate things so much! She will go to Lord Cardew—and I dare say she'll cry a little—and he'll be very sorrowful, and very gentle—and they'll bid each other good-bye—he's going away, isn't he?—and we shall have five thousand pounds, which means all the world to us!

Think Joe, another two hundred and fifty a year!
(*clasps her hands together*)

JOE. (*sarcastically, moves from mantel—hands in trousers pockets*) Money doesn't bring in five per cent nowadays—(*Crosses R. C.*)

MARTHA. Willie told me he'd manage it for us—on a safe mortgage—

JOE. (*C. staring, turning sharply to her*) Willie! ! ! He told you! Ah! then he's been here, behind my back—

(*MARTHA R. hangs her head, in deep confusion*)

Martha, you've never kept things from me before!

MARTHA. (*bravely*) Well, it's true. He came early this morning when you were out, and told me. He wanted to offer five hundred—I found he would make an enormous profit, and screwed him up to five thousand. I said it was only right that we should share—

JOE. (*grimly*) Come in on the ground floor, is the technical expression—

MARTHA. (*R. C. then goes to R. of JOE C.*) Don't make fun of it, Joe—this thing is too serious!—Of course, I understand exactly how Lilian feels—but I tell you there can be no possible harm in her going, and no possible harm in your using your influence. She'll be glad to help us, poor dear, and glad, in her heart, to see Lord Cardew again, and bid him good-bye. (*Head on JOE's right shoulder*) Oh! I can quite understand her refusing to obey Willie—we women are like that, you see—and it's only natural her not *wanting* to ask this favor. But tell her that it's for us—and she'll do it at once!

JOE. That's just what's so hateful—she'd do it—for us!

MARTHA. (*eagerly*) Joe, Joe—(*clutching his arm*)—don't you see—that would *justify* it to her! They won't see each other again for so many years,

the poor things—all their life, perhaps—don't you think she'll be *glad* to go? And if she *has* to sacrifice her pride a little—if *you* have—haven't we a duty to our children, and may we let *our* pride stand in the way? No, no, Joe—we mustn't—we mustn't!

(MAY comes running in.)

MAY. Mother, Sarah wants to know—(*stops L. C.*)

MARTHA. (*whispers to JOE*) See for yourself what it would mean to her. (*Crosses him and going to door—stays on the way to speak to MAY*) I'll go to her, dear. You stay here, and talk to father. He's a bit worried, May.

(MARTHA kisses her and goes, quickly.)

MAY. (*goes C. to JOE.*) You worried, daddy? (*She throws her arm round his neck—he draws her close to him*)

JOE. (*wistfully*) May! My little May!

MAY. What is it, daddy? Tell me!

JOE. (*taking her R. to fire*) Does it hurt you so much being poor, May?

MAY. (*stoutly*) Not one—little—bit! Wouldn't I rather be your daughter than that of the richest man in the world!

JOE. Then you don't mind going to the City?

MAY. (*getting on JOE's knee*) Mind! Why should I! Oh! I'll be so proud to bring home a few shillings to mother every week!

JOE. (*with a groan*) My poor little girl! But, May . . . suppose, suppose . . . I had—money—left me—suppose—

MAY. (*her eyes sparkling*) Daddy!

JOE. Suppose instead of going—to the—City—you could go to—College—

MAY. (*wild with excitement*) Oh,—daddy,

daddy! it's too good to be true! (*fondles him again and again*) I always knew something would happen! Oh! how I've hated the thought of the office! And I *hate* typewriting, Daddy—I do, I hate it! And college—oh! lovely, lovely! Father, father dear! (*She hugs him again, two kisses*) Mother! (*rises*) where's mother? Oh! I must kiss her too! Mother!

(*She rushes out of the room*)

Mother! (*As she runs down the stairs, her voice is heard calling*) Mother! Mother!

(*JOE remains seated, staring at the fire, and sinks his head on his chest as the curtain slowly falls*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*The drawing-room at WILLIE'S. Fire. There is a door at back C., leading to the staircase, another at R., opening into another room.*

(*MRS. BARTER is seated L. C. C. holding a teacup in her hand, MRS. BONHAM is standing, just about to go. LILIAN is by her side.*)

MRS. BONHAM. Yes, I *must* go, dear Mrs. Tremblett—I've so many calls to pay! Good-bye!

LILIAN. Good-bye, Mrs. Bonham—(*rises and later sees her out*)

MRS. BONHAM. (*to MRS. BARTER*) Good-bye, Clara—come and see me soon.

MRS. BARTER. Oh yes—good-bye, Maudie—love to the children, and Harold.

(MRS. BARTER and MRS. BONHAM kiss each other affectionately.)

(MRS. BONHAM goes.)

MRS. BARTER. (*waiting till MRS. BONHAM is well out of earshot—laughing*) They're up a tree, you know.

LILIAN. (*returns and sits up R. at tea-table*) What! the Bonhams!

MRS. BARTER. (*nodding*) He came to my husband yesterday—he's broke—wanted to borrow some money—

LILIAN. (*sits*) Oh, I'm sorry!

MRS. BARTER. (*with a chuckle*) So was Mr. Barter! He regretted it was against his principles—but he gave some excellent *advice*. They've been shockingly extravagant!

LILLIAN. Indeed?

MRS. BARTER. See how she dresses, at her time of life! And they keep *five* servants! He has been plunging, you know. They'll be sold up.

LILIAN. Poor things!

MRS. BARTER. Well, it serves her right, doesn't it? That motor car she has been talking about so much—it'll be a penny 'bus now.

LILIAN. I thought you were so fond of her?

MRS. BARTER. Of Maudie? Why, so I am! She's one of my very best friends—but one can't be blind to her faults, though—can one?

(*A moment's silence.*)

(HARRIS, the manservant, announces MRS. MORPHITT, a stout, over-dressed person.)

MRS. MORPHITT. How do you do, Mrs. Tremblett? Ah, Clara, I thought I should find you here. (*She shakes hands with LILIAN and comes down C. and embraces MRS. BARTER*)

(MRS. BARTER *rises and embraces her.*)

LILIAN. Have you had tea, Mrs. Morphitt?

MRS. MORPHITT. (*sitting in armchair*) Well, I have,—but, do you know, I don't mind taking some more. I've been at the Hamlins to condole—and the tea was *so* weak!

MRS. BARTER. (L. C. *sits on settee next arm-chair*) Ah, of course—old Mrs. Waters died yesterday, didn't she?

(LILIAN *hands* MRS. MORPHITT *a cup.*)

—I must go too.

MRS. MORPHITT. It was time she did die! She must have been nearly ninety! And what do you think her last words were?

MRS. BARTER. Oh, something spiteful!

MRS. MORPHITT. She sent for her daughter—you know (*nodding to LILIAN*) that long, thin pale Matilda, who has nursed her these twenty years—and she whispered—oh, most solemnly! “*Never call a black suit when you're dealer!*”

(MRS. BARTER *laughs.*)

—And with that she died!

MRS. BARTER. (*laughing*) How funny! (*to LILIAN*) But, all the same she was right, don't you think, Mrs. Tremblett?

LILIAN. (*seated up R. top of tea-table*) I don't play Bridge, you know.

MRS. BARTER. That *is* so eccentric of you! But how glad long Matilda must be the old lady's gone!

LILIAN. (*making conversation*) Is it her sister who is married to that awful Mr. Hamlin?

MRS. MORPHITT. (*holding up her fat hands*) Mrs. Tremblett, oh, *dear* Mrs. Tremblett, you mustn't call him *that!* Why, he's worth at least a million!

MRS. BARTER. At least!

MRS. MORPHITT. His *manners*, of course are not every good—but one forgives a great deal in the man who promoted the Great Patagonian Goldfields!

LILIAN. (*meekly*) I thought there had been such a scandal about that—

MRS. MORPHITT. (*with dignity*) Scandal? Oh no—surely scandal is scarcely the word?

MRS. BARTER. (*merrily*) The dear silly public came tumbling in—and they lost their money—(*turns to* MRS. MORPHITT) and then of course they howled!

MRS. MORPHITT. But *that* was where Mr. Hamlin showed such immense cleverness! The prospectus was a masterpiece—wasn't it, Clara?

(MRS. BARTER *takes cup and saucer and puts on table behind her.*)

MRS. BARTER. (*with admiration*) My husband say it's a classic—that it ought to be framed. Why, there wasn't a single clause of the Companies' Acts that he hadn't respected!

MRS. MORPHITT. (*seated arm chair—The two shaking with laughter*) And yet—(*laughs*)—oh dear, it was really too funny! (*to* LILIAN) But we must give Mr. Tremblett some share of the credit. It was *he* who helped to draw up the prospectus—wasn't it?

LILIAN. (*shaking her head*) I don't know.

MRS. MORPHITT. I'm pretty sure. Oh, you may well be proud of your husband! When *he* has had a hand in the prospectus, one can *laugh* at the law! A *wonderful* man!

MRS. BARTER. Yes, that's the word—*wonderful*! (*to* LILIAN) It isn't *luck*, you know—one can't call it *luck*! He did pretty well out of it, too, did he not, Mrs. Tremblett?

LILIAN. He never speaks to me of his affairs.

MRS. BARTER. (*shaking her head at LILIAN*) Ah, my dear, I'm afraid they don't interest you as much as they should! *My* husband talks over everything with me.

MRS. MORPHITT. (*stolidly*) So does Mr. Morphitt! And I may say, if he had followed my advice, he would never have been in trouble over that Amalgamated Milk Canners' affair!

MRS. BARTER. (*Patting her hand affectionately*) Dear Agatha! Still fretting over that! After all, he was only a *first-class* misdemeanor!

MRS. MORPHITT. Still, it's not pleasant for my boys, when they go to Eton, to be told that their father has been in prison—

MRS. BARTER. (*to* MRS. MORPHITT) Dear Agatha, that can happen to anyone! And besides Holloway's scarcely a *prison*—(*to* LILIAN)—is it, Mrs. Tremblett?

LILIAN. I really don't know—

MRS. MORPHITT. What I call so abominable is that they should allow shareholders to sit on a jury!

MRS. BARTER. Yes—it's wicked! Of *course* they're *prejudiced*!

MRS. MORPHITT. And Mr. Morphitt had just given a thousand pounds to Saint Samuel's, and been thanked by the Dean and Chapter! We were getting on *so* nicely!

MRS. BARTER. It's a year ago, dear Agatha! These things are forgotten so quickly!

MRS. MORPHITT. Of course—but still—(*turning to her*) would you believe it! (*taking LILIAN in*) They won't let my Henry stand for Parliament.

MRS. BARTER. (*staggered*) No—not possible!

MRS. MORPHITT. It's a fact, I assure you! He has approached *both* parties—(*Pause—Taking LILIAN in*)—he doesn't care *which* side he sits on—and they won't! And it has always been his ambition—and *mine*!

MRS. BARTER. Never mind, (*patting her hand*)

Agatha dear! I suppose you've handsomer diamonds, and more expensive motorcars, than any woman in London!

MRS. MORPHITT. You dear thing, you're *always* so sweet! (*She pats MRS. BARTER'S arm*)

(HARRIS *comes in*—announcing MISS LESSON.)

HARRIS. Miss Lesson.

(HARRIS *exits*.)

(LILIAN *springs up and goes eagerly to her*.)

LILIAN. Oh, Miss Lesson, I'm so glad! You've come at last!

MISS LESSON. (*brusquely*) How are you, Lilian? (*Coming down with LILIAN R.*)

MRS. BARTER. (*rising—to MRS. MORPHITT*) That's the *Honourable* Miss Lesson!

MRS. MORPHITT. (*rising, open-mouthed*) Oh!

LILIAN. (*taking MISS LESSON down R.*) (*To MISS LESSON*) The first time you've been here! Oh, I can't tell you how pleased I am!

(MISS LESSON *goes to fire*—MRS. MORPHITT *feels herself neglected, and coughs*.)

LILIAN. (*turning*) Let me introduce Mrs. Morphitt, Mrs. Barter—Miss Lesson. (*LILIAN returns round C. below table to top of tea-table and sits*)

MRS. BARTER. (C.) Delighted, I'm sure.

MRS. MORPHITT. (L. C.) (*bowing affably*) Charmed to meet you, Miss Lesson.

LILIAN. (*who has returned to table*) Will you have tea?

MISS LESSON. (*at fire*) No, thanks. Nasty stuff—never take it.

MRS. MORPHITT. (*sweetly*) I think I've met a

relation of yours—The Honourable *Wilfred Lesson*—a most *charming* man.

MISS LESSON. (*at fire, back half turned to audience*) Second cousin—rather a scamp—we're not proud of him. I've come across a relation of *yours*, I fancy—at least, the same name.

MRS. MORPHITT. Indeed?

MISS LESSON. (*over shoulder at fire*) Well, not in the flesh—but I sent a guinea, you know, to help put him in prison—

(LILIAN rises)

MRS. MORPHITT. Oh! (*Down a step L. C. to MRS. BARTER.*)

MISS LESSON. And never did I invest a guinea more gladly. (*getting R. C.*)

LILIAN. (*to MISS LESSON*) Hush! He's her husband!

MISS LESSON. (*tranquilly*) Ah—didn't know—should have told me—

MRS. MORPHITT. (C.) (*With immense dignity*) Miss Lesson, my husband was a victim to the most abominable injustice—

MISS LESSON. (*gets back to fire*) Think so? I had ten pounds in his Milk Cans myself—

(MRS. BARTER down L. C. OF MRS. MORPHITT.)

MRS. MORPHITT. (C.) I am sorry for that, of course—but I am sure you will admit this was not a case for the Public Prosecutor to take up—

MISS LESSON. Quite agree. Case for policeman and nearest lamp post.

MRS. MORPHITT. (*aghast*) Madam!

MISS LESSON. Tell him so, with my compliments!

MRS. MORPHITT. (*goes up to LILIAN a step*) Good bye, Mrs. Tremblett! I did not think you would allow *me* to be insulted in your own house—

LILIAN. (*standing, distressed*) I'm sure Miss Lesson did not mean—

MISS LESSON. (*at fire, cuts in quickly*) I did—every word of it! And if I were a newspaper man I'd put it in print.

MRS. MORPHITT. (*after a terrible look at MISS LESSON*) Come, Clara.

(*She goes c. door.*)

MRS. BARTER. (*wait till MRS. MORPHITT'S off—To LILIAN—half chuckling*) Oh, Mrs. Tremblett, (*shakes hand with LILIAN*) I'm afraid she'll never forgive you!

(*She hurries after MRS. MORPHITT.*)

MISS LESSON. (*discontentedly*) Nice friends you have, I must say!

LILIAN. (*gets L.*) Their husbands are business connections (*gets down to settee*) of Mr. Tremblett—they come every week. They're the only people I see. (*Sits settee L.*)

MISS LESSON. (*at fire*) Cheerful! But I'm sorry I lost my temper. Can't keep things back—blurt out the truth—suppose that's why I'm not popular! Expect you'll catch it for this?

LILIAN. (*intensely*) Mr. Morphitt will probably complain to my husband—But I agree with every word you've said—and I'm glad you've said it—they're awful people!

(*Pause.*)

MISS LESSON. (*gets c. to LILIAN and sits arm chair—taking LILIAN'S hand*) My poor Lilian! What a brute you must have thought me, never to come near you, all these years.

LILIAN (*releasing hand*) It wasn't kind, Miss Lesson.

MISS LESSON. Well, perhaps it wasn't. But you were my god-daughter and I was fond of you—And I warned you I shouldn't, when you spoke to me about your marriage.

LILIAN. Yes.

MISS LESSON. I told you then I had no sympathy with daughters who were too dutiful—and I believe I added a word or two about your venerable father the Dean—

LILIAN. He's dead, Miss Lesson.

MISS LESSON. Yes, he's dead. I made a few remarks to him, too, at the time, that he didn't appreciate. (*quietly and haltingly*) Well, Lilian, I've only called to-day to bid you good-bye.

LILIAN. (*surprised*) Good-bye?

MISS LESSON. (*nodding*) Walter and I are going to Canada.

LILIAN. What? on a visit?

MISS LESSON. (*seated arm chair c.*) (*haltingly*) No. For good.—Joe Tremblett knows, and of course he'd tell you—but I thought you'd rather hear it from me.

LILIAN. (*simply*) Thank you, Miss Lesson. (*She turns her head away, and for a moment there is silence*)

MISS LESSON. (*gently leaning to her*) Walter often speaks of you—more often than I like. (*regretfully*) Oh, my child what a hash you've made of your life!

LILIAN. (*sadly*) I couldn't help myself!

MISS LESSON. (*seated arm chair*) H'm—well—It's no good crying over spilt milk! Tell me, though—why do you allow that great brute of a husband of yours to bully you?

LILIAN. (*in feeble protest*) Miss Lesson—

MISS LESSON. (*stoutly*) I call him a brute, because he is a brute.—Don't know what sort of a wife

I should have made—no one ever had the sense to ask me—but I could almost wish *I* were Mrs. William Tremblett—

LILIAN. What would you have me do! Oh, Miss Lesson, Miss Lesson—I suppose there are some women who are born to be unhappy—

MISS LESSON. (*seated*) Fudge. That's parson's talk. We're born to be happy, all of us.

LILIAN. Then I'm an exception.

MISS LESSON. Why do you stand it? let yourself be bullied—

LILIAN. He has a will of iron—One has to bend before it, or break.

MISS LESSON. I'd have broken a good many other things first!—Then you're not even mistress in your own house?

LILIAN. It's not my house—it's his. (*Rises and crosses R. up to fire*)

MISS LESSON. (*discontentedly*) H'm!

LILIAN. (*R. leans right arm on mantelpiece*) Everything's his—I belong to him, with the rest . . . (*Pause*) Oh, things weren't so bad till my little boy died—Willie worshipped him—and I, at least, had my child. But ever since then he—he's not—I—I mean—I don't know! There are times when he has seemed sorry for me, and at first he tried—I could see that he tried—and he cared for me too, I believe. . . . But, I—oh, it has all been so awful! (*turns*)—As you see, I'm resigned. (*crouches down at fire*)

MISS LESSON. That's a quality I don't admire, and never did.

LILIAN. (*kneeling at fire*) What else would you have? Days come and go—one sits in one's corner—I do everything for peace. But, what is worse—and I've seen it grow in him, little by little, eat up, as it were, all that was good—I don't know what it is, I can't explain it—but it's as though the

whole world were blotted out, and he saw only one thing—money!

MISS LESSON. (*nodding*) Money—(*rises and crosses R. to chair L. of tea-table and sits there*) Yes.

LILIAN. (*half rising, facing MISS LESSON, leaning left elbow on tea-table*) And with that, you know, a fearful belief in what money can buy. When my boy was ill, Willie called in a great doctor—a specialist—a man who was all thermometers and rules—and the doctor sent for two nurses, and gave them instructions I must be kept from my little son's bedside—I, his mother—and he cried for me, and they wouldn't let me go near him—I, who might have saved him!

MISS LESSON. My poor Lilian!

LILIAN. (*tearfully*) Who might have saved him—yes! (*pause*) And here we sit, night after night, he plotting and planning and scheming—and wondering—Oh! I can see it!—that I don't care about the money he makes—that I hate it, hate it! and (*rises*) the years roll on, and here we shall sit to the end. . . . Well, that's how it is. I try to make the best of things. (*cross to arm chair C.*)

MISS LESSON. (*rising*) As long as you don't get like the women (*LILIAN sits armchair*) the novelists write of, who've a far-away look in their eyes—and are always misunderstood. (*down R. C.*)

LILIAN. Oh, don't be afraid! I've told you I'm resigned. And if only he will leave *me* out of his schemes—

MISS LESSON. (*turning to her, with surprise*) You? What do you mean?

LILIAN. The last few days have been especially unhappy. Oh, never mind why—I think it has blown over. And I don't complain—you mustn't think I'm always lamenting. I've brought it on myself—I realize that. I see now that I shouldn't

have allowed my father to govern me. But my mother had worshipped him—and I promised her—

MISS LESSON. (*a step down and then up R. C.*) I know! I know! Your mother took a delight in sacrificing herself—and was so supremely unselfish that she sacrificed her daughter too!

LILIAN. What I regret most of all is that I seem to have spoiled Walter's life.

MISS LESSON. (*up R. C.*) That's the penalty we have to pay for our acts of foolishness—someone else always suffers for them—(*gets down to LILLIAN C.*) However, I won't scold any more.—I'm very sorry for you, my poor Lilian! (*leaning over her—she kisses her affectionately, and is about to go when*

(*WILLIE opens the door, comes in, and pauses on the threshold, in surprise at seeing MISS LESSON.*)

WILLIE. (*gets down to fire—in mocking deference*) Miss Lesson! this is indeed an honour.

MISS LESSON. (*goes C.*)—(*eyeing him squarely*) Glad you appreciate it, Mr. Tremblett—I trust you are well?

WILLIE. (*at fire*) Enjoying excellent health, thank you, Miss Lesson—

(*LILIAN seated L. C.*)

—excellent health!—You are going to Canada, I hear.

MISS LESSON. Yes, Mr. Tremblett—I am going to Canada.

WILLIE. Still devoted to art, and the Stock Exchange, Miss Lesson?

MISS LESSON. (*up C.*) Yes, Mr. Tremblett, I paint pictures, which don't sell—and I buy shares—which don't pay dividends.

WILLIE. (*chuckling*) That is unfortunate, very.

MISS LESSON. Isn't it? If I were not going away, I should ask you to sit to me for your portrait.

WILLIE. (*up R. at fire*) (*Bowing*) An additional cause for my regretting your departure.

MISS LESSON. (*gets C.*) But I shall do it from memory—a fancy sketch—a little allegorical—

WILLIE. (*indifferent*) Indeed?

MISS LESSON. (*C.*) Yes! I shall paint you as Cupid, sitting on a cash box, with little angels behind you, flourishing prospectuses.—Early Italian style, you know.

WILLIE. (*biting his lip*) Such a pity no one ever *buys* your pictures.

MISS LESSON. Oh, this one will find a buyer—I'm sure—among your—clients! Good-bye, Lilian—(*gets to LILIAN L. C.*)

(LILIAN rises.)

—I must be off—good-bye, my child— . . .
(*She kisses LILIAN affectionately, and almost tenderly—then turns and faces WILLIE*) (*Cheerfully*)
Good-bye, Mr. Tremblett.

WILLIE. (*sourly, not stirring*) Good-bye.

(MISS LESSON goes C. door.)

(LILIAN is about to follow her—WILLIAM steps forward.)

WILLIE. (*harshly*) Stay here.

LILIAN. I want to—

WILLIE. I have told you to stay here! The old harridan has been as offensive as she could; she can find her own way to the door.

LILIAN. (*after a moment's pause*) Very well.
(*Comes down L. C. she sits down*)

(WILLIAM faces her grimly, his hands tucked behind his back.)

WILLIE. (*gets R. C.*) You've been airing your grievances, eh? Telling her what a brute I am, and so forth?

LILIAN. (*in arm chair in low tones*) I've told her I'm very unhappy.

WILLIE. (*R. C.—with a sneer*) Of course!—It's extraordinary how fond you are of snivelling!

(*LILIAN rises, going up C. gets but a step*)

—Where are you going?

LILIAN. To my room.

WILLIE. You will be good enough to remain with me.

(*Pause*)

(*He gets between her and the door—LILIAN sinks on to the sofa L. C.*)

You're very pleased with yourself, I suppose?

LILIAN. (*despairingly*) I have great cause to be pleased! (*Sits sofa*)

WILLIE. (*down R. C.*) Why not? You've opposed your husband—refused to obey him.

LILIAN. (*turning and facing him boldly*) Yes, I have refused! And it is useless—useless—useless—to re-open the matter!

WILLIE. (*R. C.*) (*Chuckling*) Hoity-toity! Quite another Ajax, defying the lightning (*he brings out his snuff box which he taps—eyeing her keenly*) The old cat will have told you, I suppose, that our Romeo is going to Canada?

(*LILIAN is silent and turns her head away—Pause.*)

(*Harshly*) Answer me!

LILIAN. (*seated*) Miss Lesson informed me that she and Lord Cardew were leaving.

WILLIE. And doesn't our little heart leap when we know that the man we love intends to desert us?

LILIAN. (*rises and faces him with a sudden violent movement*) I will not endure this.

WILLIE. (*chuckling*) The Honourable Susan has been advising her little lamb to show its teeth!

LILIAN. (*almost in a wail—turns from him*) What pleasure can it give you to torture me, day after day!

WILLIE. (*taking snuff from box*) Torture, torture! Why do you use such ridiculous words? I was merely putting an every day question.

LILIAN. (*face to him*) Yes, you have put it, day after day! Mention Lord Cardew to me again—I'll leave you!

WILLIE. (*taking a pinch*) Threatened men live long.

LILIAN. (*despairingly*) I'll leave you, I will! I can't bear it!

WILLIE. You can have your dowry, you know, for the asking. (*moving up to her*) It shall be sent on a post-card.

LILIAN. Yes—I have no money—and you have driven away all my friends—But I'd rather be in the workhouse—

WILLIE. (*a step to her*) There's a fine one in the Marylebone Road—all the latest improvements—it's lucky that should be our parish.

(LILIAN moves swiftly to the door R.)

(*With sudden fierceness*) Listen, you! I don't want any of your airs and graces. I—stay here, I tell you!

LILIAN. I will not—I will not!

(*She rushes out of the room.*)

(WILLIE takes a step forward—then pauses, shrugs his shoulders, and taps at his snuff box, then crosses L.)

(HARRIS brings in JOE, who hands his hat to HARRIS and gets to fire R.)

WILLIE. (L. C.) Ah, brother Joe! (to HARRIS) Mrs. Tremblett has just gone to her room. Tell her my brother is here, and wishes to see her. And if anyone comes to-day, Mrs. Tremblett is out. You understand?

HARRIS. (standing at back L. of doors) This is her At Home day, sir?

WILLIE. (stamping his foot) Blockhead! You heard what I said?

(HARRIS goes without a word.)

JOE. This would seem to be one of your amiable days, Master Willie. What a little sunbeam you are!

WILLIE. (growling) H'm. Never mind! I've an elder brother who monopolises all the virtues. None left for me!

JOE. (putting some woodlogs on the fire) You'll excuse the liberty?

WILLIE. Feel cold, eh? I thought that great heart of yours always kept you warm. (with a sudden change of voice) (crosses R. C.) Look here, you'll not find her in a very good mood—

JOE. (at fire—Turning to him) You've been having another go at her, eh? Another turn of the screw?

WILLIE. (R. C.) (sullenly) That gambling old dauber Miss Lesson has been here—they've been having a rare fling at me, between them—I can tell you! She has heard from Miss Lesson about their going away—(with sudden passion) I'd give something handsome if that ship went down! I would! (a step to C.)

JOE. (up to R. of table) That's very sweet of you! Walter's done you no harm—that I know of—

WILLIE. (c.) (*snarling*) All right—never you mind—its no business of yours—(*a step to him*) I've prepared her.

JOE. Thoughtful of you—very. You don't propose to stay here?

WILLIE. Oh no—I shall leave you! (*going to door R. turns at door—with sudden sarcasm*) I thought you'd come, brother Joe! Money! Oh, some of us sneer at it——

(JOE moves out R. C.—step)

—but we're all precious glad to have it!

JOE. (*up R. C. Looking quietly at him*) I frequently blame myself, Willie, for not having thrashed you more often when we were boys—

WILLIE. (*down R. at door—with a wave of the hand*) You've no sense of humour, Joe—no sense of humour—and that's such a pity!

JOE. (*sternly*) (*arms crossed akimbo*) I'm here—and I'm ashamed enought to be here——

WILLIE. The first sensible thing you've done, all your life!

JOE. Say much more in that strain and I'll leave you, and not wait for Lilian!

(WILLIE turns away, shrugs his shoulders.)

WILLIE. Oh I'll go! Now, mind you be——

JOE. (*leaning right elbow on mantelshelf and head on right hand*) Thank you. I don't want your advice.

(With another shrug, WILLIE goes R.)

(*After a moment, the door at back opens and LILIAN enters c. She goes eagerly to JOE with outstretched hands. JOE moves up to meet her.*)

LILIAN. (c.) Joe, dear Joe—Oh, I'm glad to see you!

JOE. (R. C.) You've been crying? (*he holds her left hand in his left and looks closely at her*)

LILIAN. Yes—but never mind about that! Does he know you're here?

(JOE nods.)

(*Goes close to him and dropping her voice*) Miss Lesson called, Joe—it was kind of her, wasn't it?—she came to tell me—(*drops hands*)

JOE. About their going?

LILIAN. Yes. (*she gives a long look at him, then goes L. C. and turns to him*) Oh, Joe! You'll never believe what Willie has been wanting me to do!

JOE. (*awkwardly*) I know—I've seen him. He came to my house this morning.

LILIAN. (*returning to him*) Imagine it! *Can* you imagine it? (*a step to him*) Joe, why is he so anxious to buy the place?

JOE. (R. C.) (*embarrassed*) Why?

LILIAN. (C.) Yes—why? Do *you* know?

JOE. Yes

LILIAN. (L. C.) (*wistfully*) You'd rather not tell me?

JOE. (R. C.) (*clearing his throat*) It would be breaking a confidence.

LILIAN. Think of his asking me to go to Walter—*me*—to beg such a favor of him! *Can* you understand it?

JOE. He—he—is very keen on—on——

LILIAN. He knows, of course, that Walter would do it—that he wouldn't refuse me.

JOE. That's just it.

LILIAN. (*struck by something in his voice*) Joe! *You* don't want me to go?

JOE. (*hesitating, not knowing what to say*) Lilian——

LILIAN. (*amazed*) You do?

JOE. (R. C.) (*doggedly*) Yes.

LILIAN. (C.) What? (*she stares blankly at him*) You?

JOE. That's what I've come for—that's why he has left us alone.

LILIAN. (*scarcely believing her ears*) Joe! (*she moves instinctively from him a step*)

JOE. (*with a great effort*) Sit down, Lilian!—

(*She goes and sits L. on settee.*)

—let us—let us—discuss this—(*he moves across L. and stands R. of settee*)—He promised you an—allowance—if Walter signed the deed?

LILIAN. (*still staring wondering at him*) Yes.

JOE. That would be useful?

LILIAN. I've had to go to him for every penny—

JOE. Well, that would be altered now. And Willie keeps his word, we know that.

LILIAN. (*moving towards him*) Is it you, you—who advise me to do this disgraceful thing, because of the money?

JOE. (*struggling bitterly with himself*) After all—(*sits above her on settee*) would it be so disgraceful, Lilian?

LILIAN. (*with deep reproach*) Joe!

JOE. (*doggedly, avoiding her eyes*) You and Walter are old friends—

LILIAN. (*quietly*) We love each other. Even he knows that.

JOE. (*with a gesture—rises and gets R. C.*) You're married—you're not a young girl. You and he are old friends, nothing more. And see now—why won't Walter sell the place? For sentimental reasons, isn't it? It's sentiment with him—(*turns to her*) he told me himself—when he dies the property goes to a distant cousin. So, after all! And if he lets Willie have it, he'll be rendering you a very great service. He'll surely be glad to do that!

LILIAN. (*eyeing him steadily*) Do you realize

what it would cost me to ask such a favor? I have spoiled Walter's life—I want him to forget me—
(*looking away from him*)

JOE. You would see him for half an hour——

LILIAN. I should be asking this of him, in the name of our love! (*with a gesture of despair*) Joe, Joe—I should never have thought this—of you!

JOE. (*turning away, unhappily*) No. I shouldn't either.

LILIAN. You who know what my life has been! I felt sure of you! (*leans her face on her hands*)

JOE. (*walking away to R. C. speaking over his shoulder, desperately*) Willie has promised me five thousand pounds, if he gets the estate.

LILIAN. (*letting her hands fall, and looking up—bending forward to him*) He has promised you five thousand pounds?

JOE. Yes.

LILIAN. Why?

JOE. There's coal on the land—he would make an enormous profit——

LILIAN. (*looking up scornfully*) So *that's* the reason?

JOE. Yes. Now you know.

LILIAN. (*sorrowfully to him*) And do you want the money so badly?

JOE. (R. C.) It would make all the difference to me. My little May needn't go as a typewriter—I could send her to college——

LILIAN. I see. I'm sorry, but I can't do it, Joe.

JOE. (*half over shoulder a step up to C.*) You could tell him about the coal—and me. Of course he doesn't know.

LILIAN. And ask him to sell the place much under its value? That would be making the favor greater still?

JOE. (*turning from her*) Yes. I've made a hash of it, I hadn't intended—(C.)

LILIAN. (*rise a step to him—Softly*) You couldn't help yourself, Joe.

JOE. Besides, now of course he won't do it——

LILIAN. He would, if *I* asked him! (*looking out*) (*To him,—a step to c.*) But what could I offer in return?

JOE. (*fidgetting*) He would be glad to have helped you.

LILIAN. (*looking to him*) How much would it cost him?

JOE. (*quietly and quickly*) We needn't go into figures.

LILIAN. (c.) You understand that I love him?

JOE. (R. c.) You and he are old friends——

LILIAN. (*gets nearer to him R. c.*) That I love him to-day as I loved him five years ago?

JOE. (*unhappily turning from her*) Lilian, Lilian—it's not a nice business! I'm not proud of being here.

LILIAN. (*goes to him a step, hand on arm*) Martha sent you?

JOE. Martha's a good woman, Lilian.

LILIAN. *She* wants me to go?

JOE. Martha would advise nothing that wasn't right——

LILIAN. (*wistfully*) She has her children who love her—(*turns from him a little*)

JOE. (c.) She said you would do this for us——

LILIAN. (*turns to him—Suddenly, laying her hand on his arm turning him to her*) Yes, I will do it—for you.

JOE. (*anxiously, his left seizing her right hand*) Lilian!

LILIAN. You have stood by me all these years—you have been my one friend—*You* have a right to ask this of me.

JOE. (*eagerly*) It means a tremendous deal to me—but I wouldn't ask it—God knows I wouldn't—if I thought there was really anything——

LILIAN. (*still in the same quiet tone*) No.

JOE. And as you'll tell him about the coal—and the money—

LILIAN. Yes.

JOE. Besides, he'll be away for years—perhaps he'll never come back——

LILIAN. (*breaking from him slowly. With a start*) Perhaps he'll never come back! (*feeverishly—strongly*) Oh, yes, I'll go.

JOE. (*looking at her with sudden alarm*) Lilian!

LILIAN. (*calmly meeting his eyes*) Yes?

JOE. Why did you refuse Willie?

LILIAN. (*gets from him a little*) Because *then* it was impossible—But now . . . and besides, didn't Martha tell you I'd be *glad* to go, when I heard he was leaving?

JOE. (*wondering*) Yes

LILIAN. (c.) Well, I *am* glad! As you say, he may never come back! At least I shall see him!

JOE. (R. c. *Nervously*) Yes—you'll see him—and put the thing bluntly—let him know all. Then, if he does it——

LILIAN. (c.) Oh, he'll do it! You shall have your money!

JOE. (*arguing against himself*) I don't know—when he hears about the coal——

LILIAN. That will make no difference—when I ask him—(*looking out without moving*)

JOE. You haven't seen him for two years—he may have changed—

LILIAN. Walter? He *never* will change.

JOE. You were hoping he might forget——

LILIAN. One says these things—one doesn't mean them. (*half turns to him*) When shall I go?

JOE. (*growing more and more nervous and apprehensive as LILIAN TREMBLETT becomes more excited*) Lilian——

LILIAN. When, Joe—when?

JOE. Lilian—after all—let us think for a moment——

LILIAN. Martha saw no harm in my going?

JOE. (*with a groan*) Martha sees only the five thousand pounds——

LILIAN. (*to him again—affectionately*) Dear Joe, the money will mean so much to her! Little May shall go to College——

(JOE *breaks away.*)

—Where is Walter now?

JOE. He's staying with Miss Lesson.

LILIAN. With Miss Lesson? Well, tell me—when?

JOE. They sail to-morrow——

LILIAN. (*with sudden alarm*) To-morrow! Then it is too late!

JOE. (*not looking at her*) No. Write him a line. Say you will call.

LILIAN. When?—(*getting round below settee to writing table L.*)

JOE. Say at—say at—I don't know—(*he pauses, undecided—whether to let her go or not—gets up to c.*)

LILIAN. (*at desk L. eagerly*) When?

JOE. (C.) Say at two. (*gets back of arm-chair, hands on back of chair*)

LILIAN. (*sits at her desk, takes up her pen, then, with despair*) I don't know what to write!

JOE. (*dictating reluctantly*) “I wish to see you before you go—I will call to-morrow at two”——

(LILIAN *writes it, repeating every word slowly as she writes it—JOE gets C.*)

LILIAN. (*turns to him*) The address?

JOE. (*up c.*) Care of Miss Lesson—180 Campden House Road (JOSEPH TREMBLETT *goes R. C.*)

(LILIAN addresses the envelope, then puts in the letter—she hands it to JOE, rising.)

LILIAN. (rising and going c. to him) Here, Joe, post it.

JOE. (holding the letter and balancing it in his hands) (Then making a sudden movement towards her) Oh, Lilian!

LILIAN. (up c.) What is it, Joe?

JOE. (above her R. c. Seizing her wrist and looking searchingly at her) Lilian, Lilian—have I asked too much of you?

LILIAN. (smiling softly) Martha was right—I shall be glad to see him again——

JOE. But——

LILIAN. (c) Ah, Joe, as you said—he may never come back!

(For an instant they stand face to face; then the door R. opens and WILLIE comes in, and halts.

LILIAN sees and ignores him—and walks quietly out of the room leaving door open—JOE follows her eyes and sees WILLIE.)

(WILLIE rushes eagerly to JOE.)

WILLIE. (hoarsely) She's written the letter? You've got it?

(JOE looks steadily at him for a good five seconds, then shews him the letter—turns on his heel, and goes without a word.)

(Heard whispering & sighing, now silent talks.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE:—MISS LESSON'S *Studio*. A large, rather bare apartment, with a top light. A few oak chairs, an oak table and chest—rugs on the floor. A pile of canvases, rolled up and strapped, stand against the left wall. There are signs of packing about the place. At back C., is street door that opens inwards, showing the street, and houses on the opposite side of the road. There is a door R., leading to the inner rooms.

(As the Curtain rises, MORGAN, the valet, is discovered humming a tune, packing a large lady's portmanteau, R. C., evidently brand new. He is kneeling on the floor, by his side are a number of cardboard boxes, the contents of which he is transferring to the trunk. Throws box down heavily—up R.—as signal for knock. There is a sharp single knock. He gets up and goes to the door, C., which he throws open. A PORTER is there, with another cardboard box.)

PORTER. Lord Cardew?

MORGAN. Yes. This ain't the door to come to, though.

PORTER. Not?

MORGAN. Tradesman's door round the corner.

PORTER. Sorry. You'll take it though, cocky—won't you?

MORGAN. I will—cocky.

PORTER. Sign, please.

(MORGAN signs.)

—Morning.

(He goes.)

(MORGAN shuts the door, cuts the string, and opens the box. He takes out a fur mantle, which he holds up and admires. Then, careful not to disturb the folds, he lays it down by the side of the other things, and goes on with his packing. Throws another box down heavily—up R.—as signal for knock. There is another knock—three smart taps. He gets up, grumbling, and goes to the door c., again and opens it. JOHN COLLIS is outside. He has smartened himself up, but looks very shabby-genteel.)

COLLIS. Lord Cardew in?

MORGAN. (*with a look that sums COLLIS up*)
No.

COLLIS. (*pettishly*) No—what?

MORGAN. (*calmly*) No—no, *sir*. (*softly*)

COLLIS. (*discontentedly*) H'm! When will he be in?

MORGAN. Have you an appointment?

COLLIS. I have not. But it's urgent.

MORGAN. Better call again.

COLLIS When?

MORGAN. Say—quarter of an hour.

COLLIS. Perhaps I could wait?

MORGAN. We're packing—no room. Come again.

COLLIS. (*pompously*) Tell him Mr. John Collis has called—you understand, Mr. John Collis, I shall return in a quarter of an hour.

MORGAN. (*gravely*) I shall not fail to inform his Lordship.

(COLLIS looks severely at him—And goes.)

(MORGAN closes the door and returns to his packing. He is opening last box and about to put in the last dress when MISS LESSON enters from R., and pauses in amazement.)

MISS LESSON. Heavens! What *are* you doing, Morgan?

MORGAN. Packing, m'm.

MISS LESSON. (*peering into the trunk*) Ladies' clothes! Mantles! What *does* this mean?

MORGAN. Don't know, m'm. Master's orders.

MISS LESSON. (*fingering the dresses*) These things surely can't be for *me*!

MORGAN. (*gravely*) No, m'm. Don't think so. Fancy colours.

MISS LESSON. Then for whom—?

MORGAN. (*shaking his head*) Master's orders, m'm. Gave no explanation.

(*He puts the last dress into the trunk.*)

MISS LESSON. Extraordinary! When were those orders given?

MORGAN. This morning, m'm.

MISS LESSON. And all these things came this morning?

MORGAN. Within the last hour, m'm. Trunk first—then things to put in trunk.

MISS LESSON. Gracious!

MORGAN. (*pulling down the lid of trunk*) Initials on it, m'm.

MISS LESSON. (*gets back of trunk—stooping*) L. A. E. Who is L. A. E?

MORGAN. Don't know, m'm. (*he locks the trunk, and straps it*) Looks like a trosseau, m'm. (*moves trunk to R. Standing it against chair, ready for removal*)

MISS LESSON. (*severely*) Morgan! (*cross to table L., sits R. chair*)

MORGAN. (*meekly*) M'm?

MISS LESSON. (*pointing to the canvas in the corner up L.*) Put those in the case in the hall, please, and nail it down.

MORGAN. (*gets parcel—comes down c.—halts*)
I suppose you couldn't give me a sketch, m'm?

MISS LESSON. (*consulting her note-book*) You'd like one?

MORGAN. I would, m'm. To hang in the bar.

MISS LESSON. (*not turning to him*) Bar?

MORGAN. (*gets c.*) I'm marrying, m'm—as you wouldn't take me with you. A public house.

MISS LESSON. With a lady attached, I suppose?

MORGAN. (*c.*) Yes, m'm. Pleasant, comfortable female. Wouldn't have done it though, if you hadn't sacked me.

MISS LESSON. (*half turned to him*) What would you do in Canada? We're sorry to lose you, of course. Well, I hope you'll be happy.

MORGAN. Country tavern m'm. Bar's very snug. (*Step away R.*) Will you give me a picture?

MISS LESSON. You should have asked me before. They're all strapped up.

MORGAN. (*putting bundle on chair R.*) Undo 'em in half a minute, m'm.

(*He begins eagerly to unstrap the canvas; a latch-key is heard in the outer door.*)

MISS LESSON Take them away—I'll come directly—

MORGAN. Very well, m'm.

(*He goes R., bearing the canvases, as WALTER comes in through the front door.*)

WALTER. Ah! Aunt Susan!

MISS LESSON. (*going eagerly to him*) Walter! what's all this? (*she points to the trunk*)

WALTER. Ah! They've sent the things—

MISS LESSON. Apparently—For whom?

WALTER. I hadn't time to tell you. They're—for Lilian.

MISS LESSON. (*staring*) For Lilian!

WALTER. (*up c.*) Yes. She's coming here.

MISS LESSON. (*L. c., in growing amazement*) Lilian is coming here?

WALTER. (*c., nodding*) Yes. *He* has sent her, of course. To ask me to sell the place. I told you it was *he* who wanted to buy. She writes she'll be here at two.

MISS LESSON. She has *written*? Amazing! I saw her yesterday—she said nothing.

WALTER. (*c.*) She says nothing now, except that she'll come.

MISS LESSON. (*pause*) So you went out and bought things?

WALTER. Yes.—At least Carter did—my mother's old lady's maid, you know. (*Up c. to put hat on rack*) I rushed on to her. She's about the same height as Lilian. (*Returns down c.*)

MISS LESSON. (*grimly*) (*sits R. of table*) I see. An elopement?

WALTER. If she'll consent.

MISS LESSON. (*seated*) Mad, Walter!

WALTER. (*quietly*) He forbade me the house—refused to let me see her, or write to her. Now he has forced her to come here and beg me to sell Cardew Towers. (*c.*)

MISS LESSON. How do *you* know all this?

WALTER. I know Lilian.

MISS LESSON. And you want to carry her off?

WALTER. If she'll let me.

(*A silence. They look fixedly at each other.*)

MISS LESSON. (*pause—rises and gets c., to him a step*) And how about *me*?

WALTER. (*gets to her, hands on her elbows*) It all rests with you. *You* make it possible.

MISS LESSON. (*satirical*) Indeed?

WALTER. (*steps forward to her*) She's your god-

daughter—she'll be under *your* protection—your friend—

MISS LESSON. And you?

WALTER. I am also her friend.

MISS LESSON. And you imagine her husband will believe—

WALTER. I am not concerned with her husband.
(*Gets up R., turns back to her*)

MISS LESSON. And the world?

WALTER. By the world you mean London—we're going to Canada.

MISS LESSON. And her reputation?

WALTER. (*turns to her*) People will talk. Out there we shan't hear them. (*Up R.*)

MISS LESSON. (*shaking her head*) Mad, Walter, —mad! (*Gets L.—below table.*)

WALTER. Perhaps.—I've been sane so long!

MISS LESSON. Besides—she won't!

WALTER. We shall see.

MISS LESSON. And if she will, *I* won't.

WALTER. (*turns to her*) You will.

MISS LESSON. Why?

WALTER. Because you are just.

MISS LESSON. Where does the justice come in?

WALTER. (*gets down to her c.*) (*with the first touch of feeling he has shown*) Her husband is a brute. Her visit to-day is a fresh proof of that. Imagine what it must mean to her to beg this of me! And there is no one to help her—she has no money—she never can leave him.

MISS LESSON. Things are no different now from what they were. (*goes L.*)

WALTER. (*c.*) He makes them different. We've never met, or attempted to meet—we've never written. *He* throws us together.

MISS LESSON. (*L., with a touch of sarcasm*) You've arranged it all! These clothes—

WALTER. She must have clothes. (*turns up to trunk*)

MISS LESSON. (L.) And the initials on the trunk?

WALTER. Her maiden name. (*looking at trunk*)

MISS LESSON. You've divorced her already!

WALTER. (*decided turn to her*) If she comes here to-day she at least shall never go back to him.

MISS LESSON. (*up to him*) My poor Walter! (*hand on his arm*) But it can't be!

WALTER. I know I'm asking a great deal of you, Aunt Susan—

MISS LESSON. (*still up to him c.*) I'm not strait-laced, or conventional—(*hand away*)—you know that. But it can't be!

WALTER. (*quietly*) I'm an honest man—I think you can trust me. Till *he* has a divorce, or she—that may be possible in America!—but, till then, Lilian is my friend, and yours, under your protection.

MISS LESSON. And if there be no divorce?

WALTER. She will at least have escaped—from *him*.

MISS LESSON. (*pause*) Think of my position, if I consented!—I'm old to play gooseberry!

WALTER. (*still in the same quiet, grave, unemotional tones*) There shall never be a word of love between us, till that word can be honestly spoken.

MISS LESSON. (*turns from him*) No man is capable of—

WALTER. Except a man who loves.

(*A knock.*)

—That will be she!

(*He rushes eagerly to the door, and opens it. COLLIS is there.*)

COLLIS. Lord Cardew?

(*MISS LESSON crosses to R. c., and sits in arm chair R.*)

WALTER. (*impatiently*) Yes. What is it?

COLLIS. I want a word with you.

WALTER. What about?

COLLIS. (*excited*) Cardew Towers. Most important.

WALTER. (*at door*) You come from the agents?

COLLIS. No.

WALTER. (*annoyed*) What then? I've no time—

COLLIS. (*edging his way in*) Please let me come in. The matter is vital.

(WALTER admits him, unwillingly. Before closing the door, he looks at his watch, then up and down the road.)

WALTER. (*a step down*) I can give you two minutes. I'm in a hurry, expecting someone. Be quick, please.

COLLIS. My name is John Collis. I am Joe Tremblett's brother-in-law.

WALTER. (*up L. C.*) (*Impatiently*) Well?

COLLIS. (*up R. C.*) Lord Cardew, I have certain information about your estate. I want a thousand pounds for it.

WALTER. (*pause*) Thank you. (*Point to door*) Go, please.

COLLIS. (*eagerly*) The information will be worth a hundred times what I ask—

WALTER. I make no bargain in the dark. Good morning.

COLLIS. (*nervously*) For a hundred down—

WALTER. I've told you. (*He shouts*) Morgan!

COLLIS. Lord Cardew, I'll leave the reward to you. There *will* be a reward?

WALTER. How can I tell? If you've anything to say, say it.

MISS LESSON. Speak, man!

COLLIS. (*coming down c. a step—sullenly*)
There's coal on the land.

WALTER. What?

MISS LESSON. Coal!

COLLIS. Yes.

MISS LESSON. You *say* that—how do you know?

COLLIS. I *do* know.

MISS LESSON. How?

COLLIS. I know it with absolute certainty.

MISS LESSON. You're wasting time. *How* do you know it?

COLLIS. (*embarrassed*) I—overheard—a conversation—between Willie Tremblett and Joe—

(WALTER moves L. above table.)

MISS LESSON. (*scornfully*) Eavesdropping!

COLLIS. (*turning front*) Quite by accident.

MISS LESSON. Of course.

COLLIS (*biting his nails*) There is coal. That's why Willie Tremblett wants to buy. He has had secret advice.

WALTER. (*up L. c., above table*) (*Quietly*)
Well? Anything more?

(Pause.)

COLLIS. (*almost in a shriek*) More! That's enough, I should think! You know what it means?

MISS LESSON. (*rises gets up R. c., a step*) I've heard about you. You sponge on Joe Tremblett?

COLLIS. (*sullenly*) He—he—has helped me.—
(to WALTER) Well, now I've told you. You promised a reward.

WALTER. (*turns to him*) If the information was of value. It is not.

COLLIS. (*wildly*) Not! Not of value!

WALTER. I've told you. Good morning.

COLLIS. (*almost hysterical*) They want to buy it because of the coal. Well, now of course you

won't sell. You can get thousands more—fifty, a hundred—

WALTER. (*a step to him*) But I *shall* sell, Mr. Collis.

COLLIS. (*aghast.*) What! What!

MISS LESSON. (R. c.) You overheard, you say. How do we know you're speaking the truth?

COLLIS. (*backing out*) It's true, I swear it! Give me fifty pounds!

WALTER. Good-day, Mr. Collis. (*He flings open the door*)

COLLIS. (*backing*) It's disgraceful—disgraceful! (*Gets L. of door*)

MISS LESSON. (*sternly*) That's what Judas Iscariot said, when people turned from him. The door!

COLLIS. I won't go—I won't! (*Going, backing yet*)

WALTER. (R. of door) One thing I'll promise—I won't tell Joe Tremblett what a scoundrel you are. Though he probably knows. Now, go.

COLLIS. You won't give me *anything*?

WALTER. No.

COLLIS. (*hanging on to the door-post*) You *won't* sell—I know that. I know it's only pretence—I—

(*Losing patience, WALTER takes him by the shoulder, pushes him out and closes door.*)

(WALTER comes down. Pause. He and MISS LESSON look at each other.)

MISS LESSON. (R. c.) The man's speaking the truth.

WALTER. (*comes c.*) Of course. (*Pause.*) The secret's out.

MISS LESSON. (R. c.) That's why Tremblett wants to buy! But—(*wonderingly*) Joe—Joe!

That fellow overheard Tremblett telling *Joe*—Oh, I've a terrible suspicion.

WALTER. What?

MISS LESSON. That Tremblett wanted *Joe* to use his influence on *Lilian*—

WALTER. Absurd!

MISS LESSON. Bribed him—

WALTER. Can *you* suspect *Joe*?

MISS LESSON. (*slight pause, half turns front*) No—you're right—he's a fine man—told him so yesterday. *He'd* never lend himself—no! (*Sharply*)—But—(*Quietly*) *Walter*—well? (*Going to him*) If there's *coal*?

WALTER. That makes no difference. If *Lilian* asks me to sell, I'll sell.

MISS LESSON. (*amazed, a step away, evenly*) You'll let him have the place at *his* price?

WALTER. Yes. (*He looks at his watch*) She's late.

MISS LESSON. (*hesitatingly*) Of course if there's *coal*—

WALTER. (*sharply*) It doubles the value—or trebles it. (*A step down c.*) What do I care! (*Going to her a step*) (*Quickly*) But, Aunt Susan, you've not yet told me—

MISS LESSON. You realise what it would mean? You could never come home again—

WALTER. Where *Lilian* is, *there* is my home.

MISS LESSON. Give up—everything?

WALTER. It will be for her.

MISS LESSON. (*almost wistfully—short pause*) How you love her!

WALTER. (*simply gives a nod—goes to her—he takes her hand*) I beg this of you, Aunt Susan!

MISS LESSON. I can only hope she'll have sense enough—

WALTER. (*gladly*) Then you will?

MISS LESSON. (*brightly*) Folly's catching! (*Hands on his shoulders*) What's the time?

WALTER. Nearly three. (*With sudden anxiety*)
Heavens—if—

MISS LESSON. She may have thought better of
it—

(MORGAN *comes in from R.*)

MORGAN. The luggage is going off, my lord.

WALTER. Take this trunk and send it with the
rest.

(MORGAN *beckons to Coachman off R., who enters and
takes trunk off R.*)

MORGAN. Here's the key, my lord.

(WALTER *takes it.*)

(*to MISS LESSON*) I haven't done up the pictures
yet, m'm.

(*There is a shy knock at doors C.,—WALTER rushes
up eagerly.*)

MISS LESSON. (*craning her neck to see whether
it be LILIAN*) I'll come with you now.

(WALTER *has thrown open wide the door; LILIAN
stands outside.*)

(*With a shrug of the shoulders, MISS LESSON follows
MORGAN off R.*)

WALTER. (LILIAN *is coming down*) (*Softly*)
Lilian! Lilian!

(*She enters; he closes the door. For a moment they
stand, looking almost shyly at each other. There
is silence—LILIAN moves a little distance from
him. In her hand she carries a large square en-
velope which she now holds out.*)

LILIAN. (*down R. C.*) (*Softly*) I've come to—

WALTER. (*interrupting eagerly*) Yes, yes—I know—to ask me to sell the Towers to your husband. (*Gets down to L. C., facing her*) I will, of course. What is that you hold in your hand?

LILIAN. The deed for you to sign.

WALTER. Give it to me—

(*Both extend hand—he takes deed.*)

I'll sign it. (*Cross to table*)

(*Pause. He looks into her eyes—takes the envelope and opens it, and gets L. to L. of table—sits. LILIAN holds up her hand.*)

LILIAN. (*cross to R. of table*) Wait!—there's coal on the land.

WALTER. (*quietly nodding*) I know.

LILIAN. (*amazed*) You know?

WALTER. Yes. (*Looking through deed*)

(*He sits and is about to sign.*)

LILIAN. (*R. C.*) And Joe—Joe will get five thousand pounds—

WALTER. (*surprised looking up*) Joe!

LILIAN. Yes. (*Going to table. R. of table*) I was to tell you, he said—you were to know every thing.

(*WALTER looks up.*)

Ah! poor Joe! He hated doing it! But it's for his little daughter.

WALTER. I see.

LILIAN. He has been my *one* friend—and such a friend!—these two years.

WALTER. (*slowly*) Yes—(*rising*)—it's been two

years . . . And for three years before that, once a month, on your At Home days . . . LILIAN!

LILIAN. (*smiling faintly*) Yes. . . . Oh, Walter, I'm *glad* to see you!

WALTER. I'm going away. (*Across table*)

LILIAN. I know. This afternoon?

WALTER. Almost immediately.—You're late.

LILIAN. Yes. I . . . hesitated.

WALTER. Why?

LILIAN. Why? Ah, Walter! But the thought that you might never come back!—You will?

WALTER. No. (*Shakes head*)

LILIAN. You will! *I* ask it, *I*! It would be too terrible!

WALTER. (*hoarsely*) Do you remember—Oh, Lilian, do you remember—the day when I told you I loved you?

LILIAN. (*knuckles of left hand on table*) Yes. But we had known long before that—even as children . . . So you will do this for me . . . In five years you will come back—at latest in five years . . .

WALTER. (*knuckles of left hand on table*) Wherever I've been, Lilian—*wherever* I've been! . . . I've no photograph—I needed none . . . I could see you, talk to you—almost hear what you were saying . . .

LILIAN. *Am I*—changed, Walter?

WALTER. Changed! How could *you* change? When I got your letter this morning—I had never dared to hope—

LILIAN. Nor I, nor I! And I wouldn't be here, but for Joe. When he said you might never come back! Never!—It was Martha sent him. The poor things need the money so badly! When I found that my coming to-day would bring them the money—then I was *glad—glad!* Though of course it's wrong—

WALTER. Why?

LILIAN. Because I knew you wouldn't refuse! (*Looking down*) And what right had *I* to ask such a favour?

WALTER. Is there *anything* you could ask of me that I wouldn't do? Don't you know the joy that it gives me?

LILIAN. (*slightly stretching out her hands*) So you'll come back, Walter—won't you? It's selfish of me—but there's so little that I have to live for!—Miss Lesson says I've spoiled your life—and of course I have—but that can't be helped now. And your life is *my* life. Walter! (*Hands clasped*)

WALTER. (*firmly*) You will come with us, Lilian.

LILIAN. (*startled*) What is that you say! (*A step away*)

WALTER. Yes—with my aunt and me. (*Insisting*) You are her god-daughter, and my friend. We shall at least see each other.

LILIAN. (*a step back, staring at him, frightened*) Walter!

WALTER. (*quietly*) So you will come.—My aunt knows—she approves . . . It has to be, Lilian. We have borne it all very patiently, have we not? Had you been happy—ah, then, you would never have heard of me . . . But, as it is . . . (*change of tone*) He wants Cardew Towers because there is coal—well, he shall have the place—he should have it if all the gold in the world were there! (*Intensely*) But *you* shall come to Canada—with us!

LILIAN. (*appealing*) Walter, Walter! Don't ask this of me! I have no strength—he has crushed me! (*Sinks into chair*) Let us say good-bye to each other—let me go back! (*drooping head over table*)

WALTER. Why? We demand so little, we two! To be allowed to live, that's all, and see each other! And there, in the great solitude—think of it, Lilian, not even a village, the nearest town miles away—a farm, a house built of logs—oh, Lilian, we shall be together, for the rest of our life!

LILIAN. Walter, have pity! (*Rise*) (*Extends left hand to him over table*) If you stretch out your hand I'll follow—I must, I can't help it! (*Turns away*) But you will not. Walter, let me go back!

WALTER. No. It was *he* sent you to me—he has decided.

(*LILIAN turns to him.*)

You will come with us, Lilian.

LILIAN. (*crossing R.*) No one would miss me—no one—and I am so bruised, I have been so unhappy! . . . (*Sinks into chair R.*) No one would miss me—there only is Joe. (*With a sudden start—rise and get R.*) Ah, *Joe!* I had forgotten Joe!

WALTER. (*looking at her with surprise*) Joe?

LILIAN. Yes, Joe! What would *he* think? Oh, I daren't do it—I daren't!

WALTER. (*comes c.*) Joe will get his five thousand pounds.

LILIAN. (*almost indignantly*) Do you imagine he'd take the money if I went away! No—no—when I think of him! I can't do it, Walter! (*A step to him*) He'd blame me—he'd say it was wrong—and it is wrong, I see it now!

(*WALTER attempts to speak.*)

Walter, don't say any more! I *can't* do it—(*Back a step*)—because of Joe!

WALTER. (*c.*) Shall Joe stand between us & Lilian!

LILIAN. (*R. c.*) There have been days of such sorrow—such black, bitter sorrow—and I sent for Joe—he always came. He is—oh, how can I tell you!—I don't know what he is—he's good, I suppose (*a step to him*)—that's all . . . But I'll go back, *because* of Joe!

WALTER. When he sent you to me, he knew—

LILIAN. No, no, you mustn't say that! Willie

gave me no peace—day after day—we knew he would never forgive me if I hadn't obeyed him! But Joe didn't like my going—he urged me against himself. (*Pause*) Poor Joe, as he stood there, holding the letter in his hand! (*Extends right hand*) It was for little May—to send her to College. Ah, don't you see? If I went with you—(*appealing to him*) Joe would reproach himself for the rest of his life!

WALTER. (*passionately*) Not even for Joe's sake can you refuse me, Lilian—not even for Joe!

LILIAN. (R., *not moving close to chair*) Ah, Walter, I must! (*Her head droops down*)

WALTER. (*a step to her, quietly and evenly*) Have you forgotten that afternoon when you first told me? We sat in the orchard—in the next field a boy was whistling—you told me that you loved me, and you kissed me.

LILIAN. (*sinking on to a seat, and burying her head in her hands*) Walter!

WALTER. (*with emotion, close to her chair*) There were tears rolling down your face—there were tears in the kiss you gave me—the one kiss I've had from you, all my life . . . And I've been waiting, waiting, these—many—years . . . Ah, Lilian, have you forgotten? Do I not come first?

LILIAN. (*dropping her head lower and lower*) Walter!

WALTER. (*strongly, a step up*) For an instant then, I held you close to me . . . (*Change of tone*) The next day I spoke to your father—I scarcely have seen you since.—Ah, Lilian, I'm fond of Joe, too, but you must come with me! (*Opens arms*)

LILIAN. (*springing up, passionately*) Yes, Walter—yes! I will!

(WALTER looks as though he would rush towards her. With a mighty effort he controls himself. There is a moment's silence, as they look at each other.)

(*There is a loud, imperious knock at the door.*)

WALTER. (R. C., *starting at knocking, dropping his arms*) Who can that be?

(*The knock is repeated.*)

LILIAN. (R) Open, Walter! (*Quietly*).

(*He goes to the door, throws it open. JOE stands there.*)

Joe!

(*WALTER has fallen back L. of door, as JOE comes in and closes the door. The two men make no attempt at salutation. JOE is looking haggard and anxious. He flashes a quick, uneasy glance at WALTER—then goes brusquely to LILIAN.*)

JOE. (*down C.*) I've come to take you home.

WALTER. (*up C. stepping forward*) No!

JOE. (*turning to WALTER fiercely*) No! What do you mean? (*He takes LILIAN by the hand*) Come. (*To WALTER*) It must be about time for you to go.

WALTER. Lilian goes with us.

JOE. (R. C. *with a strident laugh*) With you? Have you taken leave of your senses, Walter?

WALTER. (C.) Miss Lesson is her god-mother—she will be under *her* protection—

JOE. (*roughly*) Rubbish, rubbish! She's coming home with me, now.

WALTER. I've told her I'll sign the deed—

JOE. (R. C.) *The deed!* But you've a right to fling that at me. I've acted like a cur—yes, a cur.—But at least it's not too late. I'm here, thank God. Walter,—(*turns to him*) You've been a brave man all these years—

WALTER. (C.) Ask her.

(JOE turns to LILIAN.)

LILIAN. (R.) I must go with him, Joe!

JOE. (*aghast*) Lilian! !

LILIAN. I've suffered too much! I can't!

JOE. (*turning fiercely on WALTER, a step up c.*) This is *your* doing! You've tried to persuade her—talked of your love—(*with bitter scorn*)—your love! But it won't help you! I was right, I see, in not trusting you! She's coming home—with me! (*a step to her hand outstretched to her*)

WALTER. (*quietly*) Wait!

(*He rings—then goes to the table, takes the deed, signs it, searches on the front page, makes an alteration, and signs that. JOE stares vaguely at him, not knowing what he is doing. LILIAN stands rigid and motionless.*)

—This first of all. I've signed the deed.

JOE. (*passionately*) Damn the deed! (*clenches hand and gets up to table*)

WALTER. There must be no suspicion of a bargain. I know about the coal, and the rest. Whether Lilian goes with me, or stays, the deed is signed—

(MORGAN enters and gets L. by back.)

—because she asked me.

(JOE is about to make a fierce reply, when MORGAN comes in.)

(To MORGAN) I want you to witness my signature. Write your name here.

(MORGAN does so. JOE paces to c., and up c.)

(WALTER turns the page)—And here.

(MORGAN signs again.)

MORGAN. The carriage is here, my lord. (*gives pen to WALTER*)

WALTER. (*looking at his watch*) We've time.

MORGAN. Miss Lesson said I was to tell you—

WALTER. Go, go!

(MORGAN retires R.)

(JOE has been raging, gets C.)

—(*holding up the deed, and stopping JOE*) Here is the deed; (*he lays it on the table*) I've made one alteration—inserted your name as buyer. I sell it to you, not your brother. Make your terms with him.

JOE. (*in despair—looking out*) I deserve this, I deserve it! (*sinking into chair R. of table*) He thinks he can buy me!

WALTER. Buy you—why? *She* asked me to sell—I sell—but to you. That's all. Transfer it to him—do what you like. Now—we've finished with that. And I ask you to tell me why Lilian should not come.

JOE. (*scornfully*) Why she should not elope—with you!

WALTER. (*standing up L. of table—quietly*) There's no question of an elopement—she goes with her god-mother.

JOE. Rubbish! (*half turn in chair*)

WALTER. (*pause—with dignity*) Joe, when I say a thing, or promise a thing, I like to be believed.

JOE. (*thumping table*) And then—even then? She's married, isn't she? She's Willie's wife? (*rise*) Come, Lilian! (*gets to C.*)

(*He tries to take her hand—she shrinks from him.*)

LILIAN. (R. C.) Joe, Joe, you who've seen it all—who've been there—

JOE. (C.) We can't command happiness—we must do what is right.

WALTER. (*coming L. c.*) Your brother ill-treats her—makes her life a hell—

JOE. He's her husband—a wife must not run away from her husband—

WALTER. The husband who sent her to *me*!

JOE. That was *my* doing too! Tear up the deed, tear it up! She refused to obey him—it was I, I, who persuaded her. Because of the money! I did it, because of the money! Walter, Walter, you and I are her friends, the only friends she has, I've been false to her—well, you be loyal! (*movement*) Walter, I've admired you so much all these years—don't spoil it!

WALTER. (*eagerly*) (*up to him a step*) You think she should go back—spend the rest of her life—with this man who hates her?

JOE. Hate, hate—why hate? Besides, that's not true. He's a bully, I know, he cares only for money. But still she's his wife. And there's duty—there's law. One must not set oneself above the law.

LILIAN. Joe! (*a step to him*) Joe, he's so cruel to me!

JOE. It's hard—(*turning to her*)—of course it's hard. You shouldn't have married him—that was the mistake. But you did it, and you are his wife, the mother of his dead child. You can't get over *that*, Lilian! You must do what's right!

WALTER. (*a step to him c.*) What's right—yes. Well, can it be right that she, who was forced into this marriage by her father—forced, mind you—you know it as well as I—can it be right that there should be no hope for her, no escape?

JOE. (*facing them both*) Words, Walter, words! One can say these things! (*down c., and turns*) You know what I think of Willie!

(WALTER gives a little c.)

But listen, both of you! You're my best friends—

after my wife and children, I'm fonder of you than of anyone else in the world. (*back to audience c.*) If I felt it *could* be done I'd be only too glad to say go—go away together—go and be happy! But it can't be—it's wrong—it's not merely a question of sentiment—it's wrong, wrong!

(WALTER *gets* L. C., *tries to speak.*)

(WARN CURTAIN.)

—No—let me finish! (*gets up* R. C.) You two love each other, and you imagine that justifies all. It doesn't! Lilian has entered into an agreement, a compact—divine or not, it binds her. She must do her duty. Her case is not an exception—there's a woman she knows, worse off than she, who is only kept straight by Lilian's example. (*to LILIAN*) Isn't that so? You see, you can't answer! And that woman will have a friend too, whom she encourages to do the right thing. And so it travels. Lilian, you're Willie's wife—you've your duty—happy or not, you've got to do it! That's what we're here for. To do our duty, and help others to do the same. Oh, Walter, Walter, you *love* each other—don't *degrade* that love! (*stretches out a hand to each*)

MORGAN. (*off* R.) It's time, my lord!

WALTER. (*shouting*) Coming! (*to JOSEPH fiercely*) Others, others! She sacrificed herself once, for her father—now you want her to do it for others!

JOE. Yes.

WALTER. Her father sold her—yes, sold her—

JOE. And still she must do what is right.

WALTER. (L. C.) My aunt goes with us—she approves—

JOE. (C) She has not thought it out—she sees only one side—

WALTER. Why should *you* be more rigid, you who are Lilian's friend?

MORGAN. (*off R.*) My lord, we shall miss the train!

JOE. *Because I'm her friend! Go, Walter!*

WALTER. Lilian, Lilian, come with me!

LILIAN. (*a step to JOE*) Let me, Joe! Let me!

JOE. (*seizing her hand*) Lilian, you must come home!

LILIAN (*breaking from him, sweeping up to c. door—turns and faces front R.*) Home! To the four walls, the four empty walls! My child is dead—my husband sent me here! Am I to go back to him now? Have I not suffered enough? Is death the only release? Joe, Joe, I'll do what you tell me—but—but—be merciful! (*appealing to JOE, gets R. extends left hand to JOE, which he takes—*

WALTER. (*gets C. and clasps JOE's hand*) Yes—be merciful, Joe!

JOE. (*after a second's pause during which he has stared haggardly at them both, goes to the door*) God forgive me if I do wrong! (*and flings it open*)

(WALTER gets to doors quickly—takes hat and exits.

LILIAN follows, halting for a second as though to speak to JOE, but refrains and passes out, runs to the carriage, which is drawn up outside. MISS LESSON has had her head out of the window—she waves her hand to JOE, then holds it to LILIAN and helps her in. The carriage drives off. JOE has not moved; he closes door with a bang as coach drives off, and stands with back to door staring out at audience as the Curtain falls.)

(*Covering his face*) What have I done? Martha—Mary!

CURTAIN.

NOTE.—If introduction of carriage on to stage be impracticable, then Miss Lesson can be discovered, when the door is opened, standing with Morgan and the coachman behind her, these two holding rugs, etc.

ACT IV.

SCENE: *Joe's Study.*

(*MAY is perched on a small step-ladder hanging up a photograph of VELASQUEZ'S LITTLE PRINCESS. MARTHA is helping her. She looks serious and perturbed. MAY is chatting volubly.*)

MAY. (*MARTHA has her right arm round MAY's waist and her left hand resting on mantelshelf*) Quick, mother—quick! We must get it up before he comes in! It'll be such a surprise to him. Oh, how he'll love it! And wasn't it nice of them to let me (*turns from picture and puts hand on MARTHA's shoulder*) have it so cheap? I've only a sovereign, I told them, altogether.—Well, they said, you can have it in a cheaper frame. But I wanted *that* frame—father always said there should be a black frame, with a wide mount. Oh, I could nearly have cried! And then the master came out—the chief shopman, I mean—and he said “All right, my dear, you can have it!” He called me “My dear!” but I didn't mind! Wasn't it sweet of him, mother? Oh, I could have hugged him! (*she finally adjusts the picture*) There! I think that's right. Is it straight, mother?

MARTHA. (*eyeing it judiciously*) Yes.

MAY. Let me come down and look. (*she trips down the ladder, steps back, and squints at the photograph*) A little more to the right! Hold the ladder, mumsie!

(*MARTHA drops to R. C.*)

(*she runs up again, and adjusts it*) That will do, I think. (*she runs down*) Yes—that's good. Oh,

mother, won't he be pleased? Of course, he could buy it himself, now that he has all that money. (*she turns eagerly to MARTHA TREMBLETT*) Do tell me who left it him, Mother! (*coming down to MARTHA TREMBLETT*)

MARTHA. Never mind about that, dear.

MAY. I should *so* like to know! I think you might tell me! If he could only see, whoever it was, how happy he has made us all!

MARTHA. (*slowly, with averted eyes*) Yes——

MAY. (*turning and looking at her*) How funny you are! I can't make you out! Why aren't you more pleased?

MARTHA. (*forcing a smile*) Do you want me too to run up and down the ladder, May?

MAY. No—but you should be happier! Oh, ever so much!

MARTHA. (*wistfully*) Don't you think I am, dear?

MAY. Of course, you *must* be! (*kiss*) Oh, (*crosses to L. jumping*) when I woke up this morning, and said to myself "College!" I tell you, I didn't need calling twice! My, how I jumped out of bed! And I danced round fat, grumpy Sarah, till she thought I was crazy! And, do you know, I'd like to —(*up to it*) take that old typewriter there and chop it into small bits! I would! How it has plagued me, the nasty, stupid old thing!

(MARTHA gets down R. to her writing desk.)

I'd make a bonfire of it! (*up c.*)

(Door clicks as COLLIS comes in and shuts it—COLLIS steps forward—she sees him.)

Oh, Uncle John! (*she dances round him*) Uncle John, Uncle John! (*she dances down L. and turns to MARTHA*) Does he know, mother?

COLLIS (*up L., sourly*) About the wonderful change in your fortunes? Oh, yes!

MARTHA. (*stepping up to MAY and taking her across to door slowly*) You know?

(MAY gets up L. and then L. C. up stage.)

COLLIS. (*squarély*) I do. Certainly. And I congratulate you, of course.

MARTHA. (*gives a startled look at him—then turns quickly to MAY*) Go now, dear—there's a good girl. I want to speak to your uncle.

MAY. (*pouting*) Mother!

MARTHA. (*moving her gently to door—hands on MAY's shoulders*) Leave us, dear.

MAY. I *must* be there when father comes in and sees his Velasquez——

MARTHA. (*at door*) I will call you, May——

(MAY goes unwillingly pulling a face at COLLIS.

MARTHA has not taken her eyes off him, comes down L. C.)

COLLIS. (*with all the malice at his command*) And *you* are the person who has been so fond of giving me lectures!

MARTHA. (*facing him L. C.*) What do you mean? (*cross to him, then R. C.*)

COLLIS. Temple of all the virtues, aren't you? (*as she crosses he turns after her*) Quite another mother of the Gracchi? *Such* a fine woman!

MARTHA. (*down R. C. Boldly*) If you've anything to say, say it.

COLLIS. (*down L. C., viciously*) We grudge our brother a few shillings, don't we—and tell him he sponges on poor Joe, and is a *disgrace* to the family? But it's no disgrace to the family when there are five thousand pounds to be made!

MARTHA. (*very pale*) You know?

COLLIS. Yes. I do.

MARTHA. Well?

COLLIS. Oh, nothing! I don't stand in, of course—but then I've no influence over a handsome sister-in-law. I can't send her to a man's rooms to ask favours of him——

MARTHA. (*firmly, a step to him*) John, I won't have it!

COLLIS. Oh, a pretty business! So highly moral, and up-to-date! And now, of course, there's a pleasant scene of family rejoicing. And fine, honest Joe Tremblett—(L. c.) great, big-hearted Joe—will pocket his nice little cheque, and puff himself out, and say “Oh, I *am* so good!”

MARTHA. (R. c. *wildly*) I don't know how you've found this out, but we've *nothing* to be ashamed of—*nothing*! And I tell you——

(MAY *rushes in, dragging JOE round top of table to picture R.*)

MAY. (*dancing with excitement*) Father, father—look! (*she hauls him in front of the VELASQUEZ*) Well?

JOE. (*wistfully*) Dear little May! You bought that for me?

MAY. Yes, daddy—yes! Aren't you pleased?

MARTHA. (*gets up R. and puts her hand on MAY's arm*) May!

(JOE *bends over MAY and kisses her.*)

MAY. All right, mother.

MARTHA. (*gently pushing MAY towards the door*) May dear——

MAY. Oh, mother, you *might* let me stop!

MARTHA. Please!

(MAY *goes, looking back and making faces at COLLIS as she goes. MARTHA waits till the child has left the room and closed the door—then she goes to JOE, and lays a hand on his arm.*)

MARTHA. Joe! (*up top of table*)

JOE. (*up R. looking from her to JOHN COLLIS, who hasn't budged*) Well?

MARTHA. Joe—he knows about Lilian——

JOE. (*startled*) What?

COLLIS. That you were to get five thousand pounds if she went to Lord Cardew's rooms.

JOE. (*fiercely*) Well? What business is it of yours? (*comes down and up*)

COLLIS. Of mine? Oh, none, of course—none! It has nothing to do with me. I was merely telling my sister——

MARTHA. (*above table*) He has been very insulting, Joe.

JOE. (*stepping menacingly towards JOHN COLLIS*) What?

COLLIS. (*retreating a pace or two, but still holding his own*) Don't you come the bully over me, Joe Tremblett! And insulting—*why?* Your wife has been in the habit of *lecturing* me, these many years past. I merely remarked that *she* didn't seem so very particular, when there was money to be made!

JOE. (c.) (*looking fixedly at him*) (*to him a step*) What do you mean by that?

COLLIS. (*jeering*) You know what I mean, Joe Tremblett! You know what you've done for your five thousand pounds!

(*JOE tries to reply, but cannot—He hangs his head.*)

(*triumphantly*) You know what other people would call it, Mr. Tremblett!

MARTHA. (*from up side of table and to JOE's side down R. C. indignantly*) What could they call it? He has done nothing to be ashamed of——

COLLIS. Hasn't he? Look at him!

(*MARTHA turns, and looks at JOE. He stands with his head drooping.*)

MARTHA. (*appealing*) Joe!

(*With an effort JOE braces himself and turns squarely to COLLIS.*)

JOE. (C) See here, John Collis! We've known each other a good long time, haven't we? Well, it's true—I've sunk to your level——

MARTHA. Joe!

JOE. (*still looking at COLLIS*) It's a fact—I have—there's no use denying it—Well, Mr. Collis—and then?

COLLIS. (L. C. *disconcerted*) And then, and then! I don't suppose you'd like all the world to know——

JOE. (C.) You can cry it on every housetop—or rather in every gutter! But if you show your (*a step to him*)—face here again——

COLLIS. (*a step back deprecatingly*) Tut, tut, Joe—don't be so angry! You can't take a joke!

JOE. (*grimly*) (*clenching fists*) Do you fancy I'm joking? (*a step to him*)

COLLIS. (L. *trying to be genial*) You *do* flare up so! I—I only was chaffing! Why, hang it, you don't really think I blame you? I was merely telling Martha——

JOE. (L. C.) Never mind what you told Martha. We've finished.

COLLIS. (L.) Why, my dear chap, you'd have been a fool to let a chance like this go by! You've done what everyone would have been glad to do—I'd have done it myself—I would!

(*JOE makes an angry movement towards him, clenches fists again.*)

Oh, very well—I'll go—but I'll look in again. You're a bit excited now—but—just think it over, between you. (*backing a step*) I shan't want so

very much. But you'll find it'll pay you better—to keep *my* mouth shut!

(*Squaring his jaw to emphasize his threat, he goes defiantly. A moment after his departure, MARTHA goes quickly to door.*)

MARTHA. (*gets to door, sees it is shut and then comes down L. and speaks standing L. of JOE*) Joe! Joe! Tell me!

JOE. (*dazed, letting himself fall heavily into a chair L. of table*) Here. I've got it. (*he takes the deed out of his pocket*)

MARTHA. What?

JOE. The deed. Signed.

MARTHA. Oh. But why——

JOE. Why, what?

MARTHA. Why did you allow John——

JOE. (*seated*) To rank me with him? Because he's right, isn't he? But never mind that. We've got our five thousand pounds.

MARTHA. (*kneels L. of JOE unhappily*) Joe!

JOE. (*his eyes on the deed that he hold in his hand*) After all, as you said, our first duty is to the children. We've no right to be squeamish. A strict sense of honor, and so forth, is a luxury that's denied to the poor.

MARTHA. (*kneeling, wringing her hands*) Joe! Don't talk like that! Tell me what happened!

JOE. He has signed the deed.

MARTHA. You were there?

JOE. Yes. Lilian has gone with Walter.

MARTHA. (*starting and sitting back in dismay*) What! ! ! ! !

JOE. And Miss Lesson, too, of course. They respect the proprieties.

MARTHA. (*terribly distressed*) Joe, Joe, you can't mean this! It's not true!

JOE. But it is, I tell you. I held the door open myself.

MARTHA. (*unable to believe her ears*) You, you allowed Lilian to—run away from her husband!

JOE. (*rising nervously, puts deed on table, and pacing the room to R.*) This woman, after all, was not a mere doll for us to play with. We sent her to Walter, the three of us, for our own purposes. She refused to obey Willie—it was I who persuaded her. Well, they've gone. (R.)

MARTHA. (*rising with aid of chair*) Joe, Joe, what have you done?

JOE. Had I the right to step in and say "Go back to your husband—the husband who sent you here?" (*sits*)

MARTHA. You talk like that! You! (*leans hands on table, then sits L. of table*)

JOE. (*over chair R. of table, then gets top of table*) (*fretfully*) Why not? There's some truth in it, isn't there—there's something of justice—We wanted this money, all of us—and she was to pay for it. *She* was to go to the man she loved—we shut our eyes to the danger. *She* knew—she was afraid—she begged and implored. Oh no, we said, you must go! You're unhappy at home—we know your husband ill-treats you—we know what your life has been—but *that* doesn't matter! You're a high-principled woman, we said—and we are high-principled people, who want your lover's property and must have it—and you're to get it for us—but mind *you come back!* And now that she's *gone* we say "Oh, how dreadful!" and "Who *would* have thought it!" (*sinking down on chair top of table*)

MARTHA. (*seated L. of table crying*) You're right! It's *my* fault! Mine!

JOE. (*turning gently to her*) Fault! It's no one's fault. Or, if it's anyone's it's Willie's. It was his scheme.

MARTHA. Does he know?

JOE. (*chair top of table*) Not yet. I came straight on here. Miss Lesson approves, that's

something. Miss Lesson is with them. I sent Willie a wire to the office, he'll be here pretty soon.

MARTHA. (*wailing*) (*looking out front*) Joe, Joe, what have we done!

JOE. (*staring at her*) Done? Nothing. Why make a fuss? After all, we have the money.

MARTHA. (*her head on her clasped hands*) The money! Ah, Joe, the money!

JOE. (*doggedly*) Five thousand pounds. As Willie said, as much as I earn in thirteen years. (*passionately*) And I don't regret it—by Heaven, I don't! Why should my poor little May have to go as a typist and ruin her health? Doesn't my child come first?

MARTHA. If you only had not allowed Lilian to go!

JOE. *Then* I should have been a bigger scoundrel than I am. I don't know what's right and what's wrong—I tell you I don't. If I've been right, then Lilian has been right too. Oh, leave ethics alone—I suppose we've all been human—don't let's judge anyone! (*head between hands*)

MARTHA. I'm so sorry, so sorry! And *I* am the cause of it all.

JOE. You—why?

(MARTHA *head down*—JOE *raises her chin, looking tenderly at her,—trying to comfort her.*)

I did it of my own free will. And I tell you I'm glad—yes, I am! I'm tired of this beastly life of ours, existing always on the edge of an income. I'm tired of having no money—(*thumps table*) of this eternal pinching and scraping—of having to deny our children everything. You were quite right—we *had* to seize this chance. And why should *you* be so sorry? Lilian's gone—well, why not? Willie made her fearfully unhappy, didn't he? Why *should* a woman be unhappy all her life—what law is there that commands it? He has only himself to blame.

MARTHA. He'll blame you.

JOE. Let him. Besides, will he care when I show him the deed? And anyhow, that doesn't matter. We have the money.

MARTHA. (*miserably*) We'll have to pay for it, Joe!

JOE. (*doggedly*) My daughter shall go to college. My daughter shall be like other men's daughters—she shall not be a slave and a drudge. Great Heaven, shall I stand by, and see my little girl grow pale and sickly, when I can prevent it? Shall *she* pay for it all? No. I tell you, I'm glad! (*rise only—remains*)

MARTHA. John will talk.

JOE. Oh no, he won't! We'll square John.

MARTHA. Square him!

JOE. Yes. One has to do these things, when one—I was a fool to lose my temper. He was quite right, too, from his point of view. (*sits down again*) I'll send him a wire, and tell him to come back. I'll do it at once. (*he takes a telegram form, and begins to write*)

MARTHA. (*staying him*) I'd rather you didn't. (*turns head to him*) Let John say what he likes.

JOE. (*pausing*) After all—why not? (*he tears up the form*) What do we care? We have our five thousand pounds.

MARTHA. (*burying her head in her hands, on table*) Oh, I wish we hadn't!

JOE. (*stroking her hair tenderly*) Now, that's absurd of you, Martha! Just because Lilian's gone?

MARTHA. Yes. (*head yet down*)

JOE. (*after a pause, during which he has looked straight before him*) That can't be helped now. I tried to prevent her, of course—but I couldn't—she said things—I caught a glimpse of the truth. I don't know—I may have been wrong—(*with sudden passion*) I don't care! Where's May?

(MARTHA rises, goes to door.)

Call her, Martha—call little May! I want to see her—I want to see her happiness! We've done this for her, haven't we? Call her!

(MARTHA rises and goes slowly to L. of door—the door suddenly opens and WILLIE bursts in, feverishly excited. MARTHA gets back of JOE'S chair.)

WILLIE. Joe! Well?

JOE. (pause) Here.

(MARTHA L. of JOE hand on shoulder—JOE holds out the deed, which WILLIE pounces upon and glances at quickly.)

WILLIE. (triumphantly) Signed!!! (he turns to MARTHA) Magnificent! Martha, this is owing to you—You've done it! without your help we should never have got it! Oh, fine! (sits L. of table)

JOE. (top of table at his desk, looking grimly at WILLIE) Yes, it's good, isn't it?

WILLIE. He made no fuss?

JOE. He signed it without a word.

(MARTHA going to door.)

Where are you going, Martha?

MARTHA. (awkwardly) I——

JOE. (stays her going) Won't you stay here?

MARTHA. (with constrain) No, Joe——

(She bends over, kisses him, then goes slowly. WILLIE sits L. of table, and turns over the pages of the deed, chuckling to himself.)

WILLIE. Signed—and witnessed! Splendid!

Joe, my boy, you've done a great day's work. How did you get it?

JOE. (*leaning on table, looking fixedly at him*) I was there——

WILLIE. You were *there*? (*he glances up for a moment in surprise*) Ah, well, perhaps you were right,—(*he turns over another page*) Hullo, (*rises, leans over table*) What's this? (*with sudden anger*) By Jove! what does *this* mean? (*he looks furiously at JOE*)

JOE. What?

WILLIE. Pretend you don't *know*! *That's* why you *went* there!

JOE. (*staring at him*) What do you mean?

WILLIE. *Your* name as purchaser! (*striking deed—holds it in left hand, strikes it with right*) You!

JOE. (*seated*) By Jove! I'd forgotten!

WILLIE. (*sneering*) You'd forgotten! Of course! Oh you honest man! You fine, noble creature! Who *could* have believed it!

JOE. (*grimly*) Smart, wasn't it?

WILLIE. Smart! Disgraceful! A scandalous trick! You, my own brother—(*turns from him*)

JOE. As you've often remarked, Willie, there's no such thing as friendship in business.

WILLIE. (*pause—after a moment's pause—then with a sudden change of manner*) Ah, well—(*sits L. of table*) though I didn't expect it of *you*, I confess. (*he becomes playful, and almost genial*) Well, there it is! Oh, you *guileless* literary men!—(*leans back*) Any way, *you* can do nothing with it, of course. . .

JOE. (*seated top of table*) Can't I? I'm the owner of a property that is worth double what I have to pay for it——

WILLIE. (*waving his hand*) Tssch! Where will you raise the money?

JOE. There'll be no difficulty about *that*, when I mention the coal.

WILLIE. (*anxiously*) Come, come, you're joking, of course—you——

JOE. Joking, am I? By Heaven, I've paid dearly enough for this thing—now I'll make what I can!

WILLIE. (*staring*) What do you mean?

JOE. I am the purchaser, am I not? Very well—I'm willing to transfer the deed to you——

WILLIE. (*beaming*) Of course! I knew you would!

JOE. But not for five thousand pounds! Oh, no!

WILLIE. How much then?

JOE. Twenty.

WILLIE. (*with a shriek*) What! What!

JOE. Not a penny less. Twenty thousand pounds.

WILLIE. Joe, this is absurd—it's monstrous——

JOE. If *you* don't give it, I'll try elsewhere.

WILLIE. Look here, I'll make it ten——

JOE. No good haggling, Willie. I've got you by the neck.

WILLIE. Twelve! Just think—(*hand extends*)—twelve thousand——

JOE. Mere waste of breath. I'll have twenty.

WILLIE. Joe, I'll make it fifteen. That's my last word. I won't go beyond fifteen.

JOE. Twenty! And if you don't accept now—I'll raise. (*waiting*) So——

WILLIE. (*quickly*) Very well—done—done! (*leans head on hand*) You shall have it—I'll give you twenty—By George, you've cornered me (*smoothing brow*)—and not many men have done that! Twenty thousand pounds! You shall have it.

JOE. So—(*rises, cross to fire*) that's settled.

WILLIE. (*genially*) Smart—yes, I agree it *was* smart. Hanged if I don't rather admire you for it! Here—(*rises and gets to seat at top of table, taking deed*) let's be businesslike. (*he sits at JOE's table, takes the deed and writes on the back of it*) "I transfer my rights in this deed to William Tremblett, in consideration of the sum of twenty

thousand pounds, to be paid within one week.”
That’s right, eh?

JOE. (*right elbow on mantel shelf at fire*) Yes.

WILLIE. “London, the 11th of March, 1905.”
Here. (*he places the deed R. of table gets up and hands the pen to JOE*) Write your name underneath.

(JOE returns to table. WILLIE gets to fire, leaves
JOE holding the pen in his hand.)

Heavens! a pile of money! But it’s worth it!

JOE. It is, eh? (*he holds the pen in his hand in air—above deed slightly*)

WILLIE. (*with overflowing enthusiasm*) Ah, my boy, you don’t know all! (*rises*) The Great Central will want a good slice of that land for their new extension—and there’s a canal close by that we will run through—there’ll be wharves, warehouses, docks—I tell you there’s not a square yard of those fifteen thousand acres that I—(*a step to JOE*)—shan’t turn to account! Joe, this isn’t a fortune—it’s a series of fortunes! It’s not a hundred thousand—I shall make—it’ll be nearer a million!

JOE. (*carelessly turning deed over face downwards on table, greedily*) Really! Hang it—then you’d have given me more!

WILLIE. More! I should think I would! But don’t you trouble, you’ve not done so badly! Smart of you—yes—(*up to JOE*) it was—devilish smart! And I don’t begrudge you the money—no, I don’t! (*gets down R.—pause*) A million—and it may be more—it may be more! Five thousand acres of coal—and a whole town springing up around! Within ten years the sky will be black with the smoke of factories! Ah, (*paces L.*) By George, now I can do things! I’ll endow libraries, too—I’ll make a splash with the money! I’ll be a philanthropist (*up C.—*) why not—it pays! (*paces up L.*) Money! By Heavens, I’ll handle that money, (*coming round top of table and down R. C.*) and

make it increase, and multiply! I tell you I'll do things!

JOE. (*sourly*) And I only get twenty thousand against your million—

WILLIE. (*shakes JOE's shoulder*) For a man who has been making—(*cross easily*) three hundred a year that's not so dusty! You'll find you can do things, too—(*sits*) ah, you'll see! (*sits L. of table*) Not a bad day's work for us both! A thousand a year for you, Joe—a clear thousand a year!

JOE. I shall be able to take it easier now—go back to my books—(*left elbow on table, head on hand*)

WILLIE. And provide for your children—and sleep on both ears—and have never a care! While I—oh, you'll see! No more shady companies for me—(*leaning back*) I shall go square now—I can afford it! (*turns and leans over table, quietly*) Was I so wrong, do you think, to want Lilian to go to him?

JOE. (*suddenly remembering*) Lilian!

WILLIE. She has done me a good turn for once—she has!

JOE. (*turns to him*) You haven't been home?

WILLIE. (*seated L.*) I came straight on here the moment I got your wire. She shall have her allowance—and double, my Jove! She has earned it!

JOE. (*sullenly*) I was there, I tell you—

WILLIE. (*leans back, crosses legs*) (*very jolly*) I know—to get him to stick in your name. Oh, artful—very!

JOE. (*leans over table*) Lilian has gone.

WILLIE. (*starting back*) Eh? What? What do you say?

JOE. Lilian has gone with *them*.

WILLIE. Are you mad? Gone with whom? Where?

JOE. She has gone to Canada, with Miss Lesson, and Cardew.

WILLIE. What!

JOE. Yes.

WILLIE. (*in agony*) You—let—her—go!

JOE. I did.

WILLIE. You!

JOE. We sent her to him—we knew that they loved each other—

WILLIE. (*across table*) You—my brother!

JOE. You didn't care—you wanted the land! So did I. Well, we've got it.

WILLIE. (*livid, wildly*) I—I loved her!

JOE. (*shrugging his shoulders*) Pooh!

WILLIE. I tell you I loved her!

JOE. (*angrily*) And sent her to Walter! Forced her to go to him! (*thumps left fist on table*)

WILLIE. (*almost in a moan*) How else could I get him to sell? How else? And they've gone?

JOE. Yes, I tell you—yes.

(WILLIE turns his face to the wall—there is a moment's silence—suddenly he springs up.)

WILLIE. I'll go after her now—there's time—

(*Going L. stops—turns to JOE who has made an exclamation: WILLIE stares at him for a moment.*)

JOE. D'you think she'll come back—with you! (*with a clumsy attempt at sympathy*) Miss Lesson is with them, Lilian travels under her protection—

(WILLIE sits L. C., up L.)

WILLIE. (*breaking in fiercely*) Stop that—don't give me any nursery tales—and I don't want *your* sympathy! Ah, you've done a fine thing, haven't you? Served yourself both ways! Filled your pockets, and sent off my wife with her lover?

JOE. I went there because I was afraid.

WILLIE. Because you were afraid—of course! And being afraid, you let him bribe you!

(JOE makes a movement.)

Would she have gone unless you consented?

JOE. (*doggedly*) I did consent—yes.

WILLIE. (*savagely*) You admit it? (L. c.)

JOE. See how you've treated her all these years!

WILLIE. None of that! *You've* lost the right to preach! There are twenty thousand pounds in *your* pocket that *she* has earned for you!

JOE. (*quietly*) And a million in yours.

WILLIE. (*in a whisper*) A million in mine! That's so! (*with a sudden change—in savage exultation*) Very well—(*gets down L.*) *let* her go!

JOE. Of course!

WILLIE. (*down L.*) After all—after all—what has she been to me? *Let* her go! I'll have a divorce—I'll marry again. What do I care? I have the money—I have his estate—that's something. I've got it at less than a twentieth part of its value—(*ends L.*)

JOE. (*grimly*) I knew you wouldn't be long before you found comfort—

WILLIE. (L.) Comfort! (*a step up L. c.*) After all—we're not boys! I was just a bit hipped at first—because—well, I loved her—

(JOE laughs.)

I did. (L. c.) But she never cared for me—never. (*with sudden violence*) All right then—draw a line now—close the account—turn over a new page! I'll have a divorce—Yes—I will—And at any rate she'll be disgraced—there's comfort in *that*.

JOE. (*eyeing him quietly*) Another consolation, eh? You'll be finding more soon.

WILLIE. (*up L. c.*) What has she been to me?—the boy's dead. I'll marry again.

JOE. Yes—you'll be able to buy another wife now.

WILLIE. (*L. exalted, steps nearer table L.*) There's nothing in all this world that I can't buy! Honour, place, power—I can have what I want!—I shall use this money—yes—I shall have men cringing to me—all men. (*turns to JOE, over table*) It's the money has bought *you*, brother Joe, with your magnificent principles—it shall buy others! (*with a snarl*) We're in the same boat now—(*leans over on table L.*) we're brothers at last! (*over table*)

JOE. So it seems! (*looking at WILLIE*) And we're sons of one father.

WILLIE. (*at chair L. of table, shrugging his shoulders*) Yes, I've been a mad ass—I have—Why should I mind? She's gone, the jade, with her man—Very well, things shan't be too pleasant for them, out there—I'll see to that! And so, to the devil with her, and with all the rest too! (*goes down L.*)

JOE. (*takes up photograph*) Sons of one father! . . . He'd have been very pleased with what we have done to-day!

WILLIE. He's dead—don't worry about him. (*paces up L. and down L.*)

JOE. (*gazing intently at photograph*) He was an honest man, our father—wasn't he? Proud of his name? *He* didn't care about money?

WILLIE. (*L.*) Because he never had any, that's all.

JOE. (*rises, for the first time taking his eyes from the photograph, and turning fiercely on WILLIE*) (*up R. of table*) Don't you talk about *him*! Leave *him* out! D'you hear?

WILLIE. What's up now?

JOE. (*R. of table, fiercely, wildly*) We're brothers at last, are we? You've caught me, in your

bestly net? She can go to the devil, and you'll make things unpleasant for her, and you've got your million?

WILLIE. Got it, and mean to stick to it, I can tell you. *I'll turn Catholic and follow the Pope's orders.*
(*Getting to table.*)

Another attack of virtue, eh? It's rather late. (*he snatches the deed*) Good-bye. (*he looks at it*) Hulloo, you've not signed it! Here—(*he pushes the deed before JOE*) Just endorse it, will you?

JOE. (*R. of table*) And suppose I don't?

WILLIE. (*standing over table*) Come, come, don't play the fool. I want to be off.

JOE. What would the old man have thought of it all? Of us?

WILLIE. (*L. of table*) Never mind the old man. You've got your twenty thousand—

JOE. (*suddenly*) No, by God, I haven't! And I won't! (*he shouts "Martha! Martha!"*)

WILLIE. (*furiously*) What new game is this? Sign, you fool—sign!

JOE. I won't! Ah! You'd crawl through any muckheap to get your money? And you want to drag me with you? To make *my* name stink, too?

WILLIE. (*holding out the deed and pen*) Sign the deed. Here. Sign it—that's all—you've only to sign—

JOE. We've sold her, between us—haven't we, for this?

WILLIE. (*savagely*) Sign, you fool—sign!
(*raging! You shall have a hundred thousand—SIGN!*)

(MARTHA comes in anxiously followed by MAY)
(*They get up at back c.*)

JOE. Sign it? Yes, I'll sign it! yes! (*he seizes the deed, tears it in two, and thrusts it in the fire*) (*ramming it between the bars*) There's my signature! There!

WILLIE. (*aghast*) God!

JOE. There! You and I at least shall not profit! Whatever happens to Lilian *we* shall not gain!

(WILLIE *makes a frantic rush to the grate—JOE steps between.*)

No—let it burn! It makes me clean!

(WILLIE *draws himself up—looks steadily at JOE for a moment, then goes to the door, at the threshold he turns and speaks, with deadly hatred.*)

WILLIE. You know what you've done? You're a beggar again. Well, rot in your poverty! Rot! *I shall never let you do it. It's better to rot than to be a beggar.*
(*He goes.*)

MARTHA. (*quickly*) Joe! (*she runs to him top of arm chair*)

(MAY *follows wonderingly—JOE drops into a chair.*)

JOE. May—my little May! (*he puts out his hands to the child*)—May! *You'll not forget if you are a type-writer. May is a girl who made a good life for herself in the world.*
(MAY *runs to him.*)

May, May, I couldn't do it—I couldn't (*sinks into arm chair*) I tried, but I couldn't! Forgive me! May, May, you'll have to go to the city!

MAY. (*kneeling L. of him*) Daddy! Daddy!

JOE. I'm a failure in life, May—

(MARTHA *gets R. of him, leans on mantel shelf head bowed down.*)

And—I've failed again here. I've no money—I never could make any money—I had a fortune—I

had only to sign that paper—and I couldn't do it! I've burned what was yours—I've burned your happiness. But, May, May, it wouldn't have been honest!

MARTHA. (*R. of arm chair stealing her arm through his*) Oh, Joe, I'm glad! Oh, Joe, I'm glad!

JOE. (*happily*) Martha!

MARTHA. Yes, I'm glad!

MAY. (*throwing her arms round his neck*) Father, I love you! I'm sure you're right, because it's you! And I love you, daddy—more than ever!

JOE. My little May! (*he draws the child close to him, and buries his head in her curls, as the curtain slowly falls*)

Sarah (showing face) Is us to have supper without any meat? CURTAIN. *As usual.*

